TALES

OF

THE PRIORY.

VOL. I.

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TALES

OF

THE PRIORY.

BY

MRS. HOFLAND.

> I present not my Tales to the reader as if I had chosen the best method of ensuring his approbation, but as using the only means I possessed of engaging his attention.
>
> CRABBE'S *Preface.*

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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a good deal in favour of the mother, the children, and the relations visited.

But who is that venerable man in the elbow chair opposite, towards whom all the company, from time to time, direct their kindest regards? Whose footstool that pretty girl is arranging, whilst her elder sister reaches his velvet cap, and assures him, that the frost renders it necessary for him?

That is Mr. Harland, the father of Mrs. Selwyn, the uncle, and former guardian of Mrs. Denbigh: the young girls are Mary and Letitia Selwyn, who, with one brother in the army, and two younger ones, now at home for the vacation, with another female, constitute the whole of the Selwyn family.

That female sits close by Henry Selwyn; she is intently employed in sewing a canvass bag, which being intended for his shot, is made under his own eye, an eye which looks upon her so kindly, that its glances are at this moment watched

with some envy by a lovely blue-eyed girl of eighteen, whose features bespeak her of a different family; in fact, she is the orphan niece of a neighbouring gentleman, who is a rich bachelor, and doats upon her, yet has the good sense to permit her frequent intercourse with a family, whose society he knows to be invaluable to her. The lady, whom she loves yet more than she envies, has been five-and-thirty for the last four or five years; remaining stationary neither from her own desire or connivance, but from the will of her nieces, who are with great reason most fondly attached to her: she is Miss Selwyn, and will in due time be Mrs. Letitia Selwyn, the only sister of the master of the house. In this house she was born; here she has lived nearly all her life; and here she hopes to close her eyes amidst the offspring of her brother, who are not less beloved than if they had called her by the more endearing name of mother.

Rose de Grey, the blue-eyed girl, remembers the time when Henry Selwyn would have applied to her to sew his shot-bag, or perform any other little service of that nature; and she cannot reconcile to her feelings his present preference even of his excellent aunt. In truth, Henry has appeared somewhat estranged from Rose during his two last visits to the Priory, yet there never was a period when, in every other respect, he appeared more amiable; and even in this estrangement he has evidently an interest in her of no common character; but if his feelings on this head have any confidant, it is his aunt, and she is too wise and kind to betray them.

To this party Mr. Selwyn had for several successive evenings been employed in reading the admirable tales of Miss Edgeworth and Mrs. Opie; and on concluding his agreeable task, it was observed by one of the ladies, "That as they had been highly amused, she hoped

they would also be effectually benefited by the lessons communicated."

"I do not doubt it," said Mr. Selwyn, "for the heroes and heroines of these stories are in no instance endowed with any unattainable qualities; they show us the people with whom we really mix, the joys and sorrows, the trials and temptations with which we are actually surrounded, and by this means teach us how to guard against the common difficulties of our situation, the common enemies of our peace; how to warm and exhilarate decaying virtues, and give stability and propriety to our habits, principles, and conduct."

"I am glad to hear *you* say so, Sir; for my father frequently observes, that he does not believe any man was ever really amended or improved from witnessing a theatrical exhibition, or reading a novel, although the strongest examples of good may be placed before him in either case," observed young Denbigh.

"The weakness of human nature is such," returned Mr. Selwyn, "that it does indeed too rarely adopt that which yet it fully approves; and we are too frequently obliged to acknowledge, that experience is the teacher of wisdom; but surely there are to be found in her school some less severe disciplinarians, to whose lessons we attend, and to whose precepts we adhere, so as to avoid certain quick-sands, and seize certain breezes, which cannot fail to render the voyage of life easier and better than it would be with-out them. I am decidedly of opinion, that no well-written story, in which the conduct and situation of our fellow-crea-tures is naturally and faithfully repre-sented, can fail to be of use, even where no particular moral or doctrine is incul-cated to warn or to excite. Every re-capitulation of this kind must increase our knowledge of human nature, its wants, dependencies, duties, weaknesses, and powers; and draw together those

scattered rays of knowledge, which our own observation justifies as to general fact, but has received in too desultory a manner to produce utility, or even amusement."

"And in how many instances are we thus taught to trace the over-ruling hand of Providence," said Mrs. Selwyn, "and led to reflect on occurrences which claim our gratitude, our humility, or our repentance? How frequently do we find that imagination, thus employed, is the handmaid of truth, that our faith is increased by the extension of our knowledge, and that the troubles of life induce us with more earnestness to seek for the consolations of religion?"

"True," said Mrs. Denbigh, "those who live *in* the *world* see many things come to pass well worth observation and reflection."

"And those who live *out* of it frequently see still more," said Mr. Selwyn; "they are by-standers, and the great

drama of life is performed before them, as spectators, quick to discern, willing to applaud, and yet able to criticise."

"Well, for my part," cried Rose de Grey, with that enchanting simplicity and engaging confidence in the good-will of him she addressed, which was combined in all she said, "I am sure, Mr. Selwyn, *you* could tell us a most excellent story; and since *you* have now finished these delightful books, do pray begin one to-morrow evening, it will be greatly for the benefit of us young ones, because we cannot forget any thing that *you* say, and I am certain you would not refuse us any good that is in your power."

"I will not refuse my share to such an entertainment certainly, my dear," returned Mr. Selwyn. "I will even do more, for I will endeavour to persuade my wife, sister, and cousin, to take their turns in providing for your evening amusements."

"Thank you, dear sir," and "I fear I cannot tell you any thing worth hearing," were now heard on every side; but the scheme thus started by Rose, was carried into effect on the following evening, although, to the great regret of all, Miss Selwyn was called from home in the course of the day, to attend the sick bed of a distant relation.

As these stories necessarily engaged several evenings, and met with some slight interruptions, it is deemed expedient to offer them in the usual form of chapters, as affording the common and convenient pauses which are required by even the most indulgent reader.

TALE I.

"As my sister is absent," said Mr. Selwyn, "I shall take the opportunity that circumstance affords me, of giving you the History of an Old Maid, which being

tution, and laid the foundation of latent disease, which operated slowly through a period of several succeeding years, during which time the education of her daughter was at once her employment, her consolation, and her reward.

"Maria Templeman was a child, not only docile and meek, but possessing a strong mind and lively imagination, with a fine natural taste and perception of excellence, so that education was rendered a pleasing task, by no means unsuitable to the exertions of an invalid. Frank was scarcely one year younger; he was a fine, lively, handsome boy, of an open, careless disposition; warm-hearted, courageous, affectionate; one of those children who make friends wherever they go, and whose very faults seem licensed by their admirers. Too noisy to be a meet companion for an ailing mother, Frank was consigned to the nearest boarding-school, from whence he came home every Saturday, to stay two

nights, show his improvement, recount his frolics, delight his sister, and eat plum-pudding in abundance.

"That Frank should be an indulged darling in a family so situated, can scarcely excite surprise. George was at a great distance, and the species of affection he claimed was of a higher nature, or at least very distinct from that of a lovely, and, in one sense, an only son, the survivor of many. When George visited home, a man, engaged in a profession which had called for deep thought, and diffused the air of a student over his brow Frank was a fine lad, of about twelve, scampering on a poney after the hounds, or praised for being already a better shot than the young squire, his elder brother.

"That brother aided the confederation of spoilers, by delighting to relax from severer application with such a companion; and during the time of his visit all was gaiety and amusement on the

part of Frank, who even, at this early period, declared he would be a soldier.

"Between Maria and Frank, although evidently different in disposition, there existed such peculiar affection, it was always believed, that whatever was wrong in the latter would be with ease corrected by the former; and the anxious mother, in giving instruction to her daughter, believed that she was conveying it to her son; finding a silken rein could guide her gentle girl, she unhappily conceived that it would prove not less efficacious when applied to her giddy boy, since, though more volatile in his manners, his heart appeared capable of still stronger affection than that of Maria; and from the way in which all the pursuits of their childhood were carried on, whether of sport or study, she was led to conclude that Frank could not exist without his sister, nor know any enjoyment independent of her, and of course, that

her power over him in higher affairs might be deemed almost irresistible.

"That Frank loved Maria better than any body, or any thing besides, there can be no doubt; but he had many pleasures and many partizans, in which she had no share, and which contributed to lessen her influence. His frequent visits to his father's house exempted him from punishment which he merited, and the supply of good things with which his pockets were loaded on his return, never failed to gain him friends and admirers; so that his follies were sure to be countenanced, and his insolence (if in the hour of triumph he happened to be insolent) was for the same cause forgiven. When he happened to be extraordinarily generous, or was under the necessity of rewarding those who had suffered for his sake, or dared at his command, Maria was constantly resorted to for assistance; and the readiness with which she ever contributed her little store to assist him,

derogated from the value of her gifts in the eyes of the pampered boy; he thought the pleasure she had in bestowing, repaid the obligation; nor did he hesitate to remind her that she enjoyed superior comforts' to him, in residing constantly with 'dear mamma, who gave her every thing she wanted.'

"That Maria enjoyed superior advantages it was true; but they did not consist by any means in those indulgences which were conceded to Frank, as a kind of recompence to him for the temporary loss of the paternal mansion. Mrs. Templeman had deeply studied her own sex, their duties and relative situations, ever intending to be the future instructress of her daughters, whilst her sons were left solely by her to the father's direction. In pursuing this plan, she had been led to consider woman as occupying a subordinate rank in society, and called upon in all cases, and upon all occasions, to give up their wishes and the exercise of

their wills, to our sex, and enjoying the influence they hold over us, only from our affections.

" In consequence of this belief (which forty or fifty years ago was a pretty general one in this part of the island,) she thought it her duty to render the mind of her daughter patient, submissive, gentle and long-suffering, meek when reproved, grateful for kindness, and silent under injury ; ever active in doing good, yet passive in enduring evil ; and under every kind of suffering, seeking consolation from God, but seldom redress from man.

" This beautiful fabrick of feminine and Christian virtues, Mrs. Templeman had exemplified in her own path through life, rather negatively than positively ; ever mild and unassuming, no one had insulted her understanding, or undervalued her opinion ; she had been given by a tender father, to a fond and faithful husband ; pecuniary want was totally unknown to her, yet no superfluity of wealth had

tempted her to extravagance; no alluring society had wooed her to dissipation; her mind was noble and simple, her heart warm and charitable; her conduct virtuous, her character spotless; but all her trials had come from God only, to whom she wisely as humbly bowed in pious resignation; not from man, with whom as such, she might have contended with justice and prudence. Of course her views were bounded, she carried the virtues she inculcated to an extreme; in teaching her daughter that which was due to others, she entirely omitted that which was due to herself, and rendered her totally unfit to cope with life under any other circumstances than those in which she herself had trod it.

"Under such management, Maria was inured to self-denial, and Frank to self-indulgence. Maria was made submissive, Frank haughty; the girl naturally generous, was led to beneficence; the boy, though born with the same disposition,

was rendered profuse, extravagant, and selfish; one was taught consideration as a feminine duty, the other led to despise it as only the virtue of a woman.

"I beg of you to note the consequences of this unhappy education, in a youth of as great promise and more engaging manners than I ever met with besides; one, whom to see, was to love.

"In Maria's fifteenth year, the long suppressed disease of Mrs. Templeman appeared with the most alarming symptoms, and her anxious husband and daughter were awakened to the most distressing fears. Never had this excellent woman appeared so admirable as now; it might be truly said, she 'comforted her comforters.' The doctrines by which she had acted uprightly through life, were her support in death; she knew 'that her Redeemer lived.' During her illness, George visited her to their mutual comfort; but at such a time as this, it is no wonder that he did not

perceive those errors in the education of the younger branches, of which I speak, and which were of a nature to be developed only by time; otherways the evil might have been checked, and its consequences avoided.

" At this period, George had formed an engagement with a young lady every way desirable, and it was his happy lot to be consoled for the loss of his beloved mother, by the tender cares of his wife, which is certainly the happiest destination of a human being. The affliction of Mr. Templeman and Maria was beyond description, that of Frank was, for a short time, as acute as either; but at his time of life it could not be expected to be lasting, and his conduct was perfectly natural.

" There was in Maria, a devotedness to every thing connected with her mother's memory, every one to whom that mother was bound, by nature or inclination, an attachment and tender-

ness alike ardent and lasting; and she evinced her regard for the departed, by loving all she had left, and serving them more effectually than she had done before. Disinterested even in her sorrows, she sought only to comfort her father and brother, and though her own loss (from having during her whole life been confined to her mother's society) was, perhaps, more immediately felt than even Mr. Templeman's, she yet sought only how to soothe his sorrows, and amuse or occupy his thoughts. But when alone, her restrained tears flowed freely, and she lamented her loss with all the vehemence of youthful anguish, and the bitterness of lasting regret.

"The nearest neighbour of Mr. Templeman was a gentleman, whose habits, manners, and conduct, were so totally different to his own, that there had never existed any real cordiality or confidence between them, and a formal visit once a year had hitherto been their only inter-

course. Mr. Thornton, the gentleman in question, had early in life possessed a fine estate, which having injured by dissipation, he sought to restore by a wealthy marriage among the circles into which his taste for expense had introduced him. His search was in vain as to his principal object, but in the course of it he happily attached himself to a person of great merit and good family, whom he married, and whose engaging manners and prudent conduct bade fair to reclaim him. A short time, however, served to prove, that although altered, he was not reformed; an inordinate desire of obtaining money, succeeded the idle profusion with which he had formerly wasted it; and he was perpetually engaged in some speculative scheme for bettering his estate, which consumed its immediate produce, denied his wife and her two sons those comforts which their situation entitled them to enjoy, rendered him oppressive to his dependents, disliked by his equals, and proved

daily how near a connection subsists between a spendthrift and a miser.

"Mrs. Templeman loved and pitied Mrs. Thornton, but her own ill health, and the little acquaintance there could possibly exist between their husbands, prevented her from showing the regard she really felt. This unfortunate woman died in giving birth to a daughter, which soon followed her, and from that time her husband's affairs grew daily worse. This was about three years before Mrs. Templeman's death, an event which really affected Mr. Thornton a good deal, by compelling him to remember his own wife; to recollect how much he had been indebted to her prudence, and to perceive by the change in his circumstances, how much he had lost in a woman whom he had always treated with harshness, and denied the comforts which his folly and avarice had now nearly lost to himself.

"In consequence of this newly awak-

ened sympathy in Mr. Thornton, he became at this period the frequent visitant of his widowed neighbour, and his attentions were thankfully received in this period of sorrow and desolateness. He was generally accompanied by his youngest son, Montague, now just entering his eighteenth year; a youth, whose interesting countenance, modest manners, uncommon talents, and cultivated mind, rendered him a much more desirable companion than his father.

"Montague Thornton had ever been the darling of his mother, not only because he for many years her youngest child, but on account of the delicacy of his constitution, and the precocity of his mind. Sickly children, from being confined to the society of their elders, are frequently forward in their manners, and if not wise, are yet cunning and imposing; the ability displayed by this youth was not of this description. He was simple and child-like in his manners,

and artless in all his conduct; but his mind was capacious, his perception rapid, and his powers of reflection and combination beyond his years. Whatever was beautiful in nature and excellent in art, attracted and delighted him; and though timid almost to awkwardness in the company of strangers, at those moments when his taste was gratified and his enthusiasm awakened to his mother, or those he loved, he would express the emotion which affected him, with a vigour and sensibility which evinced not only his feeling but his powers. Eloquence sat upon his lip, persuasion sparkled in his eye, and maternal love (while soft solicitude mingled with fond delight) pronounced poor Montague a genius.

"Perhaps a more unfortunate appellative could not have been found in the opinion of the father, who, although he had within the last twenty years ran through as many schemes as any genius could have done, yet ever inveighed bit-

terly against every person so denominated, because he ever connected the idea with that of a book-worm, which was his peculiar aversion; of course Montague was no favourite with him. Nor was he much happier in his own opinion in his eldest son; who, as he advanced towards man hood, became disgusted with his father's conduct, aware that his estate was so mortgaged as to be little better than a nominal one; and who, on the death of his mother had, with little reference to his father's will, placed himself under the care of his maternal uncle, with whom he was at this time on a voyage to the East Indies.

"The younger brother had now shook off the complaints which hung over his childhood, and though not robust, was healthy and animated. Mr. Thornton thought it was time to do something with him; but to his great mortification, Montague declined all his schemes for future aggrandizement, and earnestly

desired the means of prosecuting those studies which would enable him to enter the church.

"Mr. Thornton had ever held the powers and attainments of Montague in contempt, and this predilection assured him he was right. 'It was the last way in the world,' he said, 'by which a man could hope to make his fortune, and what should any young fellow think of, but making his fortune?'

"Though this was repeated in some shape or other every day, and all day long, it was always meekly, but firmly parried by Montague. 'Allow me,' he would say, 'my dear father, to observe, that wealth has no charms for me beyond its supposed power of being a passport to superior society, and this I shall secure by the profession I have chosen, if it were not already my birthright. My taste, my habits, my constitution, and in fact, my principles, call upon me to make this choice. I have thoroughly

considered the matter, and I know the world cannot offer me any equivalent for resigning it; but if, my dear Sir, I could really essentially serve you, by tearing myself even from this cherished wish, I will endeavour to bend my will to the performance of this duty.'

"Mr. Thornton was well aware that to initiate his son into any of his own various avocations, would only be showing him how a gentleman may be degraded, and an estate lost; he therefore ceased the strife, and agreed to send him to Cambridge, as the nearest, or perhaps he thought, the least expensive university; for that was ever an object in the disposal of his family.

"Things were in this state when Mrs. Templeman's death produced the intimacy of which I spoke. Mr. Thornton had a facility of scheming, and he soon conceived an idea of marrying Montague to Maria; and this idea gained ground when he perceived, that so far from

despising the simple choice his silly boy had made, both the father and daughter seemed to approve it much, and predicted that he would not fail to be an ornament to his profession, not less from his learning than his virtues.

" Mr. Thornton was, however, much too worldly-minded himself, to suppose it possible that Mr. Templeman would really consent to Maria's union with his son. 'No, no,' he would say, internally, 'so careful as he has been to secure her a fortune, and so handsome and good as she is, that is never likely; but the girl may be got for all that — if Montague were not such a fool — with her fortune in my fingers I could redeem all that is gone.'

" Perhaps two young people of sixteen and eighteen could no where be found more likely to form that union of heart, which arises from sympathy and congeniality, than Montague and Maria; they had each been devoted to their mother,

and were alike bereft of, that endearing tie; they had been brought up in the country, were attached to its simple pleasures, were awake to the sublime and romantic beauties by which they were surrounded, and blest with leisure to survey and opportunity to converse on all that engaged their attention: but the charm, which was perhaps more mutually attractive than every other, arose from this circumstance; Montague possessed that knowledge which Maria desired. He could impart to her opening mind the information in which she was unavoidably deficient, and form her taste to his own. The acquisitions of his mind awoke admiration in her, and the unfolding of his noble sentiments, or religious views, impressed her with the purest esteem, whilst her docility, gratitude, and unassuming merit, awoke his tenderness, approbation, and affection, in fact, though neither were yet aware of it,

"They loved — but such their guileless passion was,
As in the dawn of time informed the heart
Of innocence and undissembling truth."

"You will grant, ladies," observed Mr. Selwyn, with a smile, "that I am now giving you love in my story, for it has beguiled me into poetry. I must not, however, rest upon this flowery bank, but, like my subject, encounter a different scene.

"The father of Montague had penetration enough to discover the state of his son's mind and hurry him away to college, lest some premature disclosure should eventually thwart his views. For some time the poor youth was restless and unhappy, surprised and almost ashamed, to find that the 'learned leisure' he had so long and so ardently desired, failed to provide him with the power of improvement and the sense of happiness it had promised at a distance; his truant heart continually recurred to Maria, her looks, her words, even her

drawing and her music, perpetually obtruded on him, and at last he became apprehensive that he was really seized with that passion of which he had heard little but read much; he examined his symptoms, was convinced of the fact, and blushed down to the pen in his fingers.

"It was to very little purpose that Montague told himself, over and over again, 'that he was, or would be, *poor*, and that Maria was, or would be, comparatively *rich*; that he had chosen a profession which would necessarily keep him many years in a dependent state, during which time he could not presume to reveal his wishes, and others might.' Lovely visions of respectable livings, elegant retirement, modest comforts, and Maria ever gentle and happy, content to share the cares, and fully competent to the duties of a pastor's wife, floated around his imagination, and prevented the lessons of prudence, which forbade

him to hope, and magnanimity, which urged him to resign her, from taking any effect.

"Montague soothed the contention in his heart, by writing an elegy on departed hours, and found, before he got to the end of it, that his 'bosom's lord' was not also its tyrant; for employment is much more efficacious than argument, and even the lover, who appears to feed his passion by poetry, will be relieved by his exertion. All violent passions are subdued by mental application, and the brilliant imagination, which paints an angel, will frequently find adoration of his subject evaporate during his labour.

"Maria, too, was sad even to sorrow; but, happily for her, Frank left school at this period; and, although his society could by no means fill up the void occasioned by the loss of such a superior visitant, yet he was not only so dear to her heart, but, so peculiarly the object of her duteous care, owing to the re-

peated charges she had received from her mother on his account, that she felt as if she had no right to admit a rival to him in her thoughts. The lambent flame which played around Maria's heart was neither an alarming nor consuming fire at this period, and though she could not forbear to think on Montague, yet Frank evidently retained his usual interest in her feelings, and was loved by her with a love 'surpassing that of sisters,' for it united (young as she was) the solicitude of a mother with the affection of a friend.

"Frank soon grew weary of home, his gay and ardent spirits naturally sought a wider field to range in, and he became impatient for his father to purchase him a commission, to which that father was the less averse, because the nation, at this time, was in profound peace.

"Mr. Templeman loved this youth with a tenderness which was almost idolizing, which was the more excusable

because, in his person, he greatly resembled his beloved mother, and, in his taste and disposition, was much like himself. He was at once inclined to indulge his wishes, and yet pained at the thoughts of parting with him; but, as he was not selfish, he finally yielded to the wishes of one in whose desire he found new food for the pride and hopes of a parent.

"Frank became a soldier, and Maria, in parting with him, felt as if she had lost a portion of her very existence; but whilst her heart still bled from this wound, Montague returned, and she was sensible that his presence healed it. He was improved in his person, and either study or anxiety had thrown an air of melancholy over his features, which suited their character and added an expression of sensibility to that of intelligence and ardour, which had already marked them. Ladies who had been used to pass him by as a 'poor creature,' now discovered 'that his face, though pale, was handsome, his

person, though slight, was elegant, his eyes, full of fire and softness,' and, in short, poor Montague was become a dangerous young man.

"Of such attractions in himself, Montague was not aware; no human being, blessed as he was with conscious integrity, could think more humbly of himself; and this humility increased on beholding Maria, who was now become a very lovely young woman. Though his late residence had been in one sense retired, he had yet learned in it more worldly knowledge than he possessed on going thither; he had heard the wishes of fathers for their daughters, and daughters for themselves, frequently descanted on; and he was tremblingly alive to all that impeded those wishes—which rose with increased fervour in his invigorated though anxious passion.

"Montague learnt but too soon that his father's situation was worse than when he had left him, that Maria was of more

value than ever in the sight of her father, whose house had, by the late residence of Frank, been once more open to that world which the long illness of his lady had excluded; and that Maria was therefore entering on life with all the attraction of novelty, in addition to beauty and fortune.

"Many times did Montague resolve to fly from an enchantment which his reason told him to avoid; but the appearance of a rival chained him to the spot; it was the fascination by which an animal is led to seek its own destruction, and as soon as he found that a neighbouring baronet sought to make Maria his bride, he determined to subject himself to the misery of a situation of which till then he had not in the fullness of his imagination formed an idea; so exquisite was the misery under which he suffered.

"But when the baronet was dismissed, when it was understood that the recom-

mendations of her father, the solicitations of her lover, had been alike fruitless, that Maria had declined the honour, the splendour, and the man, (who was, in the present case, by no means an unpleasant or unworthy part of the bridal paraphernalia,) then Montague found himself equal to acting wisely; he determined to prosecute his studies, to attain honours, which might be the prelude to competence, even to making himself friends so far as he could do so consistently with his integrity and fastidious delicacy; and, in short, to hope for distant, but better times.

"'And could he again depart in silence?'

"He could, for he had 'made a covenant with his tongue,' but his eyes, his actions, those thousand ways in which the soul peeps out to indicate her daily employment and her nightly anxiety, had told in many an endearing instance, what had been the severity of her late suffer-

ings and the sweetness of her present hopes; and if a blush on Maria's cheek, or a tear in her eye, were sometimes visible, we cannot suppose that the communications of Montague's gentle spirit, distant and unencroaching as it was, were thereby discouraged.

"The very morning of his departure had nearly proved fatal to his resolutions, for he found Maria in the garden, and, on announcing the purport of his visit, her cheek, which not a moment before resembled the new-gathered roses in her hand, became paler than the lily, and in a moment after, of the ruby's redness. Conscious of her confusion, to hide it she offered him the flowers in her hand; that hand trembled, and so did the one which approached it; yet it seized, and for a moment held its captive; and for a short time a declaration evidently hovered on the lips of Montague, which might have been dear to his companion's heart, but

would certainly have added nothing to her information.

"A tender sigh, a look full of meaning, was alone exchanged between the conscious lovers; yet Montague departed full of hope, for he perceived that Maria did not regard him with indifference; and he could repose upon her constancy and integrity; in whatever way her kindness was implied, he knew that her simplicity was allied to strength, and her tenderness untainted by coquetry.

"This hope animated his endeavours, and he soon became distinguished at the university, from which in a short time he received honours, which drew the attention of a young nobleman of similar pursuits, but far inferior powers. Some time afterwards this nobleman's father, pleased with the choice of his son in such a companion as Montague, proposed that they should travel together, and made our lover such an offer, as in his situation it

was impossible with any consistency of character for him to refuse.

"On this occasion, Montague flew into the country, less to bid adieu to a father who would have dispensed with the attention, than to cast one more look on Maria, and say at least with his eyes, 'Oh, live for me' Before such a long and awful separation, all fears and scruples naturally gave way, and the overflowing heart found utterance in the most ardent, yet humble and respectful language that love could dictate. Maria, modest even to timidity, was not only too ingenuous and sincere, but too much affected to repress the effusion which he uttered, and which in a moment she felt to be one of overwhelming anguish, was, in fact the only consolation of her heart. The affectionate reception her father had given to Montague, the manner in which he always mentioned him, gave a kind of tacit permission to his addresses; therefore she did not in the first moment

feel as if she had violated any duty in allowing them, but she dared not admit of any correspondence between them without his immediate sanction, and a moment's reflection convinced Montague that he could not at this time speak to her father.

"He had acted from an impulse too powerful for him to resist in a moment of peculiar trial, but so soon as he was able to think, he perceived that he had no power to make an offer of his hand, or to seek in any way to bind Maria to a being so dependent on contingencies as he was; and that which his sense of justice excited, his honest, noble heart, and lips unused to guile, expressed in the most open manner, though the recollection plunged him in the most poignant anguish; still, however, he departed comparatively happy, the sense of being beloved (the best, the sweetest, of our earthly sensations) soothed his present sorrows, and as he had long known and

closely studied the nature of that heart where his own lay prisoned, he could not doubt its faith and constancy—Maria had confessed her love, and that included every promise.

" This exchange of mutual adieus and confidential tendernesses took place (the very hour of Montague's departure) in the plantation near Mr. Templeman's house, just after he had bade adieu to her father. Maria walked forward to the end of the avenue, listening with downcast eyes and glowing cheek to Montague's hasty but eloquent description of the growth of his passion; but when she got to the termination of the walk, she interrupted him by the terrible words, ' we must now part,' in a tone which banished at once his rapturous effusion and her own roseate blushes.

" ' Yes, we *must* part,' reiterated Montague standing as if root-bound to the spot.

" A very great poet of our day has

shown us various fierce, mysterious, and even wicked characters, who have yet possessed the power of awakening love in the heart of woman; though a little sceptical on this head, I will not dispute the point, but I may be allowed to say, that no description of man could be found more likely to excite the most lively and profound affection in the breast of an innocent and tender girl than Montague Thornton; the virtues of his heart, the endowments of his mind, called for perfect admiration; his humility, anxiety and physical delicacy, awoke the softest emotions of pity. In any circle of men, Montague would have shone with superior lustre, how then must he appear in the eyes of a young woman, who had seen little of polished society, and had drawn on books for all her ideas of excellence? To her he appeared a being of super-human attainments, and one whose soul wasted the fragile tenement where it deigned to reside, less by the intensity

of thought, than of passion for herself. How could she be less grateful to one with so much merit and so much love? a being who, at once conferred honour and intreated mercy, with whom, even suffering would be sweet and poverty meritorious!

" As these thoughts rushed tumultuously through the throbbing bosom of Maria, and sprung in glistening drops to her eyes, Montague caught her in his trembling arms, and held her a moment to his heart; then, as if dreading reproach even more than parting, sprung from her view, and was in a few moments far from her sight.

" Maria remained alone, speechless, entranced; she returned to herself and was wretched; a sad foreboding pressed upon her heart, a long and melancholy future was before her; she had ventured to decide upon her own fate, and shrunk from beholding that dear father with whom she had ever, till now, lived in the

most perfect confidence, and whose right in her had been never doubted by herself; she was surprised at her own temerity, vexed at her own conduct, but the moment her thoughts reverted to Montague, the far distant wanderer, whom she might never more behold, all was forgiven in herself, and confusion of thought subsided into sorrow of heart.

" Maria was rescued from her sadness by a letter from Frank, intreating her to procure for him, an increased allowance from their father; this was not difficult to obtain, and the gratitude her brother professed to feel for her success, served to rekindle that love towards him, which a yet more vivid flame had in some measure eclipsed; sensible of this, she resolved to atone for that which she considered a fault, by omitting no means of affording him pleasure, or doing him service.

" Frank did not suffer her talents for kindness to lie idle, his wants, or his wishes were a perpetual drain on her

purse, and frustrated many a scheme of private charity, many a source of innocent gratification; but about a year after the departure of Montague, a source of nearer trouble superseded all the solicitude arising from trifling errors in Frank, and the protracted absence of her lover.

"Mr. Templeman had the misfortune to break his leg by a fall from his horse, and the fracture was so severe as to confine him many weeks, and induce a slow fever, which eventually sapped the springs of life. All the native tenderness, the habitual duty and acquired skill of Maria, were called forth on this trying occasion, and so wholly was she a daughter, that even the cherished secret of her heart now only affected her, because it was a secret from her father. It was, however, a satisfaction of the sweetest kind to hear her beloved parent frequently speak with more than common approbation of Montague; and he

even once observed, 'that if that excellent young man was tolerably settled in life, he would have most willingly given her to *him*, dear as she was, and undoubtedly entitled to a wealthier marriage.' Maria, blushing and agitated, could not answer, and he passed from the subject to that which appeared ever the nearest to his heart, the welfare and conduct of his youngest son.

"Like his wife, Mr. Templeman had imbibed the idea, that Maria possessed an influence over Frank of the most extensive kind. Never considering that all their efforts had united to produce a contrary effect, by rendering *her* ever subservient to *him*. Maria readily promised to devote herself in every possible way to a brother who was so dear to her, and was almost hurt to suppose that her devotion to him could be required; aware, as she was, that it had been exerted from earliest infancy, even beyond the conception of those who required it.

" For a long time Maria struggled to confine her fears and sorrows to her own breast; and, so far as regarded her father, she was enabled to repress the emotions which might have wounded him; while the higher sensibility which was awake to all his wants, sympathised in all his pains, and cheerfully partook all his privations, continued to maintain its undiminished benefits. When at length all hope was over, and silent grief and incessant watchings had rendered her unequal to continuing her cares, Maria summoned Frank to assist her 'labour of love,' and cheer by his presence the departing parent.

" Frank instantly obeyed the summons, and beheld with deep concern that the days of his indulgent father were indeed numbered; but although he felt and wept, yet he could not brook the confinement of a single hour; and Maria, with all her indulgent consideration,

could scarcely refrain from blaming him.

"I will not awaken unnecessary sorrow; I am too well satisfied with the affectionate dispositions of all my young hearers, to make any trial of their feelings, in depicting the death-bed of a father, about my own age and situation in life. I shall therefore only say,—(There, sit down, Letitia, my love.)—(I understand you, Rose.)" * * *

* * * * * * *

Mr. Selwyn found that he had run into the very error he wished to avoid, the feelings of his family were all awakened, and it was necessary to suspend the story at this moment, although he soon restored his hearers to cheerfulness, by insisting on their praise for so large a portion of love in his story.

CHAP. II.

—— you were used
To say, extremity the trier of spirits.

SHAKSPEARE.

"It is now necessary to tell you, that some months before the death of Mr. Templeman, his eldest son, now the father of two children, had been induced to visit Canada with his whole family, for the purpose of recovering a large property in that country to which his wife and her sister were entitled as co-heiresses of their mother; the benefit of his counsels, and the support of his presence, were therefore denied at this trying time to Maria, and unhappily continued to be so for many succeeding years.

" Mr. Templeman had disposed of all his worldly affairs with that ardour and justice, which had ever characterised him; he restored his estate, considerably increased in value, to his heir, and left to each of his younger children ten thousand pounds, at that period a very handsome fortune. It appeared that in a former will, he had divided his personal property more in favour of Francis; but the extraordinary expenses of this young man since he had been in the army, and the large sum he had paid for his commission, occasioned him to supersede this testament by the present, which he considered to be more just.

" On this subject Maria thought not, for she was only a mourning daughter; and it surprised her that Frank could either think or speak upon it; but she considered that his greater command of feeling belonged to him, as a man capable to combat sorrow and encounter business. Ever the most disinterested of

human beings, and a total stranger to worldly affairs, even when her sorrow had subsided, she did not weigh as she ought the necessity of understanding her own expenditure, and the nature of her resources for future life; although her situation with Montague Thornton naturally was in conjunction with all the future.

"The fact was, that although Montague occupied her mind much as a lover, she had never dwelt on him in the light of a husband; her own extreme modesty and ignorance of the world, the character of romance and poetical attachment, which ever hung about the memory of Montague, and his distant wanderings had forbid her hitherto, even in imagination, from entering into the detail of common life, in her ruminations on their future destination, to which might be added the ignorance of their mutual attachment in her own family.

"Had Montague been at home at this

time, had he been near to whisper comfort for her loss, and hope for himself, Maria would have been soon enabled to rejoice in her own power of rewarding his affection, and endowing him with a fortune equal to the wants of a couple, whose views were centered in the happiness of each other. Unhappily she did not even know where he was; and Frank, to whom she confessed her situation with regard to him, without condemning her conduct, spoke of all probability of their union as being so far distant as to throw all prospect of it into the shade.

"Frank was aware that Maria would have many admirers, and he sincerely desired that she should not marry; she was necessary to him; he had accustomed himself to lean upon her in all emergencies, and he was by no means sorry that she should have attached herself to an object of so much merit, as to leave no plea for inconstancy, and yet so situ-

ated as to be unable to marry. Frank had lived long enough in the world to bring into maturity those principles of selfishness, unhappily imbibed almost in his cradle.

"Frequently would he advert to that will, in which three thousand pounds more had been given to him, which yet never led him to remember, that more than that sum had been expended upon him — then would he sagely reason on the folly of giving women fortunes at all, which only served to render them imperious, haughty, and tyrannical, and enable the meek to purchase tyrants in avaricious and speculating husbands.

"Maria heard all this in silence, and gave only a sigh to the memory of that beloved father who had thought differently. It had been that father's express desire that Maria should continue to inhabit his house, until his eldest son could take possession of it; for as she was nearly of age, had a near relation of her

mother's in the neighbourhood, and he could not doubt the propriety of her conduct, his benevolence led him as far as possible to preserve his present establishment unaltered.

"Frank was soon recalled to the duties, or at least the pleasures, of his profession, and the following winter was indeed cheerless and monotonous to Maria, although the relation to whom I alluded seldom quitted her. The following spring offered a new subject of interest in the letters of Frank, which had till then arrived but very seldom, but he now scribbled with all the freedom of a novel reading young lady, — for the gallant captain was in love.

"Frank described his fair enslaver as a most accomplished young lady, of high family and great expectations, whose superior prospects rendered him alive to all the solicitudes of a lover; and in a few weeks Maria became so imbued with his hopes and fears, so fully persuaded

that his future weal or woe depended wholly on his present success, that even when she learnt that the lady had no fortune, although her friends demanded a handsome settlement, she neither considered the impropriety of such a match for Francis, nor the injustice of such a demand on the part of the lady; she thought only on the sufferings of her brother, and the means of relieving him.

" Naturally generous to all, and habitually so to her darling brother, her first impulse would have led her to make him the offer of pecuniary aid, if it were necessary; but she felt that she owed it to her eldest brother to concert with him in all affairs of this nature; but one evening, as she was turning the matter over in her mind, the object of her cares suddenly presented himself before her.

" Frank's appearance denoted not only the fatigue incident to a long and hurried journey, but his haggard, agitated

features showed suffering of no common kind, and the very moment he entered the room he said, in a voice half choked by emotion,

" 'Maria, have you love, pity; have you any regard for me at all?'

" 'What a question! but I see you are ill and harassed to death; what can I do for you?'

" As Maria spoke she embraced him, but he shrunk from her, and sinking on a chair burst into an agony of tears.

" Maria had never seen a man under such a paroxysm of unbridled sorrow, and her grief became mingled with alarm. She had heard of the laws of honour in his profession, and the idea of a fatal duel instantly took possession of her mind; terrified, almost to fainting, she gazed in his face with a look that bespoke the intensity of her feelings, and the sincerity of her sympathy.

" Shaking off the agony which oppressed him, and seizing her hands, he

exclaimed, 'Oh! Maria, you only can save me — to you only can I look!'

" 'I fear that is impossible! what can I do?'

" 'Resign to me the three thousand pounds, which you know my father once left me, and which you cannot want — Eliza will then be mine.'

" Maria started — 'is all this distress about money only? How could you terrify me so much?'

" 'My dear girl, if you lived in the world as I do, you would soon know that money, or rather want of it, is a perpetual cause of the most poignant distress — consider its importance in my case, I must either marry Eliza immediately, or resign her; her uncle, Lord Wilmington, insists upon it, and insists too upon my settling on her the whole fortune which I received from my father, and —'

" Francis stopped suddenly, his countenance again assumed the same wild ex-

pression which had before alarmed Maria, and in breathless agitation she besought him to finish what he was saying.

" 'Maria, I told you truly you could *save* me: by that I meant from the pursuit of a vice, which has already injured me so far, as to compel me to seek your assistance — I mean gaming.'

" Maria shuddered, and silent tears trickled down her cheeks, her countenance exhibited the severity of that anguish, with which she contemplated such an error in the brother of her fondest affections, the son of those upright parents, who had in so especial a manner placed him under her sisterly care, and a single ejaculation referring to their departed worth, alone escaped her lips.

" The heart of Frank was penetrated with this appeal to his filial feelings, the room in which he was placed, the still mourning habit which Maria wore, and the keen sense of sorrow he had so soon

effused over her ingenuous countenance; all served to recall the precepts of his early life, and the beloved beings who had instilled them: he dropped suddenly upon his knees before Maria, and solemnly renounced for ever that dreadful vice which had enthralled him, on condition of her forgiveness and assistance.

"The sight of Frank thus humble and penitent, touched the heart of Maria to its inmost core; she too sunk upon her knee, and as she embraced her repentant brother, besought the Almighty witness of his contrition to blot the crime he lamented from the awful record of human frailty, whilst to the offender she repeated her intention of assisting him with the money he requested.

"Francis blessed her, kissed her, called her his preserving angel, and protested, that henceforward she should be the guide of his life.

"When these more violent emotions were subsided, their impression with

Frank seemed to vanish also, and the facility with which he shook off sorrow or thought, in his boyish days, had evidently reached his manhood. He ate a hearty supper, and retired early to that rest, which it was indeed evident that he wanted.

"With Maria, the disclosure of this eventful evening operated far differently; anxious for his virtue even more than his happiness, she mourned the sin of which her brother had been guilty yet more than the sorrow it had caused; nor did she retire to her couch until she had again besought Divine forgiveness for her erring brother.

"Frank arose light of heart, less to thank his sister than to pour out effusions of admiration upon his Eliza; but as they all related to her person, her accomplishments, or her manners, Maria could not learn whether she really possessed those peculiar virtues and qualifications, which she was now more than ever aware were

required for the happiness of Frank, whose early marriage with a prudent woman might have been an advantage to him, but must otherwise be fatal to all her long cherished hopes respecting him.

"It was unfortunately in Maria's power to command immediately, seven out of the ten thousand pounds which constituted her fortune, and therefore the money desired by Frank was procured in a short time, and he departed as happy as he had entered miserable.

"Soon afterwards, on the conclusion of his minority, he received the hand of his adored Eliza. Cake, gloves, and a short letter, announced the happy day to Maria; after which Frank's correspondence sunk into the lethargy to which correspondents of his description are always subject, for where love is the only stimulant, marriage is generally the opiate which lulls exertion into forgetfulness.

"Maria's relation felt surprised that no

invitation had been received from the young couple, more especially as they learned from Canada, that the affairs of their brother, might still retain him there a considerable time. But Maria's own mind did not revert to the subject, she had now reason to believe Montague was returning, and her heart, satisfied with the happy issue of Frank's affairs, was devoted to the expectation of her lover.

"Montague came, and in her eyes at least surpassed all that his youth had promised; more manly and accomplished he was yet equally gentle, modest, and unassuming; there was in him an air of dignified mildness and repressed ardour, which never fails to give a woman of sensibility the purest gratification, since it combines an idea of her lover's worth, with her own power over him. He had not seen Maria since the death of her father, and the manner in which he evinced his regard for the memory of that worthy man, bound him by new ties to

her heart, and formed an excuse to herself for all that appeared imprudent in the entire surrender of her heart, to one whom circumstances still prevented from claiming her hand.

"Scarcely, however, had Montague become settled in his father's house, when Maria received a pressing invitation from Frank, to set out immediately to London, where he then was with his bride. The lady, whom a sense of propriety in Maria, had again made her a visitant at this time, urged her to accept the invitation in those terms of authority, which age and experience allowed her to use, and early obedience to all her superiors inclined Maria to obey, in despite of her own dearest wishes.

"This lady, like every other person, loved Montague Thornton, but she despised his father, and therefore disliked the connection, and concluding prematurely, that Maria's choice arose rather from her seclusion, than the high worth

of its object, earnestly desired that she should see and be seen in the world, as a means of obliterating early impressions, and placing her eventually, in that rank she considered her calculated to adorn.

"Acting upon this reasoning, poor Maria was hurried off to London; and Montague, in the preparation for her departure, saw the death of those hopes which had been his only solace through years of pilgrimage; and so much was his spirits oppressed by the circumstance of her departure, that he had not the courage to renew his protestations of devotion, much less to solicit approval of his constant flame. The increased desolation of his father's house, the independence which Maria had succeeded to, the splendid match which it was reported Frank had made, all forbade him to seek one whose very simplicity, love, and confidence called for his forbearance; could he ask her to share his poverty, to whom he could have given an empire? Or could

he seek to support himself by sharing the fortune of one who, but for him, might bask in the sunshine of fortune? Impossible! Thus were they once more parted."

CHAP. III.

———— Look on beauty,
And you shall see 'tis purchas'd by the weight,
Making them lightest that wear most of it.
SHAKSPEARE.

"When Maria reached London, she had the satisfaction of being received by her beloved Francis with all the warm cordiality and fond affection, which were displayed in his boyhood, and which had ever left on her mind a sense of peculiar delight. She was not sorry to be received by him alone, for she had heard so much of the personal beauty and family claims of her sister-in-law, that she could have no desire to be seen by her, under the exterior induced by a long journey, and the emotions arising from a susceptible heart, full of recollections to

which Mrs. Templeman, though herself an orphan, might perhaps be a stranger.

"Yet when Maria had retired to her own room, she could not help thinking that it would have been difficult for her to have gone to the opera, when her husband was about to receive one only and much-loved sister; a sister too, who had in fact been the medium of securing to her such a husband as Francis.

"The following morning introduced her to Mrs. Templeman, junior, and Miss Belford, her sister and inseparable companion. They were both handsome, showy young women, possessing an air of fashion and conscious superiority, which rather awed Maria by its claims than invited her by its attractions. Although as young as herself, they exhibited that self-possession which she had thought till now could only have been given by time, and one of self-satisfaction, which she felt neither time nor society could ever give to her.

"The first glance of Frank towards Maria denoted exultation, as he perceived that his rustic sister was evidently struck with the person and dress of his town-bred wife; but in a few minutes he became evidently fearful that any conversation should arise which might develope the mind of her he had been accustomed to depict as all-accomplished: he had been married long enough to know, that his lady, 'of outward form elaborate,' was 'of inward less exact;' and although he had been hurried away by fashion and dissipation into a foolish admiration of their votaries, he was conscious of a taste for better things, and began to wish that he had not been 'in such a confounded hurry.'

"His fears, hopes, and wishes, on this head were unknown to the sisters, who talked incessantly to each other on subjects which were all new to Maria, and called for neither comment nor reply,

until at length she was dragged into it by unpleasant altercation.

" 'My G—, Caroline! did you see what a fright Lady Dunstable was last night? I really do think that her rouge was laid on by her footman. Yet I must own, I admired her neck with that plain robe; it was exactly the thing *pour la guillotine*.' *

" 'I wish it were in good earnest; for, good heavens! how she did stretch out that everlasting crane to talk to the Marquis of Middleham: but I do detest the sight of her, that's poz!'

" 'I don't; and I shall go to her next party.'

" 'Lady Dunstable's party? Impossible!' said the major, but without taking his eyes from the newspaper in his hand.

" 'Why impossible, my dear? I know a person who can procure tickets for us all.'

* This dialogue passed in 1795.

" 'But don't you also know who that woman *is*, or rather *was?* You cannot visit her.'

" 'Very true; you are perfectly right: I am quite of your mind, Templeman,' said Miss Belford.

" 'But I am *not*,' returned the wife; 'she is married *now*; and that is enough for any reasonable person.'

" Mrs. Templeman, in speaking, turned to Maria, as if looking for her support. The major also turned; but before either of them had time to claim her suffrage, Miss Belford cried out, vehemently, 'I am certain Miss Templeman will be of my opinion: every unmarried girl must.'

" 'I do not yet understand the subject,' said the stranger, with a timid air.

" 'How should you?' said Francis; 'such subjects never met your ear in discussion till now.'

" 'But I will tell you,' vociferated Caroline; 'and you shall be the judge.

This very woman, Lady Dunstable, when a mere country Miss, married a Mr. Osborne, a well looking man, scarcely past his prime, with a noble fortune; he gave her a fine settlement, and supported her in great style. Well, in about a couple of years she eloped with Sir Harry Dunstable, her husband's nephew, just out of his minority, and stepping into possession of a good estate. He has paid damages, brought her to town, and she is showing off again as a first-rate fashionable; but I say she ought to be avoided by every body.'

" 'Undoubtedly!' said Maria, with emphasis.

" 'Ridiculous!' said the wife: 'her conduct is nothing to us; nothing at all.'

" Every feeling of integrity, propriety, female dignity, and religious purity, urged even the timid Maria to speak in behalf of their insulted rights; and a thousand reasons seemed to rise at once

upon her mind; but before she could arrange one of them consistently with that sense of delicacy which ever actuated her mind, the more ready Caroline exclaimed: —

" 'Nothing to *us!* you must mean nothing to *you*, who are disposed of. Is it not a plain case that if every woman were to act as she has done, the world would be soon in a pretty condition?'

" 'You are right,' said the major; 'perfectly right.'

" 'To be sure I am, if one woman takes two good matches for her own share, another woman must go without one of them; besides, she has her chance of widowhood into the bargain, which is always worth something; so that she may probably have three husbands, while a girl of superior pretensions never catches one. I have no patience with such creatures, they ought to be hooted out of society.'

" 'Well argued,' said Frank; 'but yet —'

" The *yet* lingered on Maria's ear, but to her great mortification nothing followed; was it possible, that the son of her father, a man so refined, so severe in his ideas of moral obligation, should suffer this to pass in silence; these meditations were interrupted by the young wife, who insisted on speaking.

" 'What nonsense you do talk, Caroline, just to please Templeman, and humour his country notions; pray, can't Osborne marry again? Is he not a better match than ever, for he looks sixty, and has almost broken his heart? Neither you nor Miss Templeman need to despair, surely, so why should you be so inveterate?'

" Softened a little by this allowance, Miss Belford said, 'Well, she did not much care if she went, as undoubtedly there would be good company,' adding 'what do you say Miss Templeman?'

" 'My brother has given a decided negative,' said Maria, not doubting but the master of the house had ever the power of decision, and being desirous of avoiding direct refusal, in even a case which totally forbad compliance.

" 'Your brother!' cried the ladies in one breath, 'your brother, indeed! do you mean to say no one is to be consulted but your brother?'

" Maria coloured deeply, and hastily arose; never had she witnessed a matrimonial fracas before, and so high was her sense of a wife's duty, so great her horror of even the slightest division in wedded union, that she was overpowered by her fears of conducing to it, and she withdrew in distress and confusion.

" Frank hastily arose, and, tenderly taking her hand, led her to the door; 'your spirits are still weak Maria,' said he; 'but you will soon be better in London.'

" Maria was grateful for his attention,

but she felt that the panacea for her spirits was in the country; she was surprised, on reflection, at the change which appeared to have taken place in Frank, he was wont to be rash in his opinions, impetuous in their delivery, subject to hasty conclusions and angry expressions, for which it was true he generally atoned by candid confession; of his foibles in this respect he appeared now completely cured, but his cure was rather effected by indolence, than self control, since he was silent in a good cause, and supine under circumstances that affected his character and principles.

"A gentle tap at her door broke Maria's reverie, followed by the entrance of her new sister, who with an air of recovered good humour inquired, 'if she would not wish in the first place to drive to the milliner's, as it would not be possible for her to go out till she had made herself presentable.'

"Maria was thankful for the consider-

ation this attention implied, and readily accepted the offer; on which she was told the carriage was now at the door.

" On descending, Maria could not help inquiring 'if the elegant chariot she saw was her brother's?'

" 'It is mine,' answered Mrs. Templeman; 'you know it was impossible for me to live without one, indeed I would not have married a nobleman if he had not kept me a carriage, as fond as I am of titles.'

" At this moment Frank presented himself with that open, manly countenance, illumined by the sunshine of a smile, which had ever captivated the hearts of all who witnessed it. Maria glanced upon him and felt surprised that a woman to whom he had devoted himself, could bargain for a toy.

" Arrived at their destination, the wants of Maria were immediately supplied; but the sisters were never weary of examining, discussing, and bargaining,

to the great annoyance of their rural visitant, who, although her heart was in 'her ain countrie,' yet felt how many more desirable things the new world into which she had entered, might furnish to her view.

"After ordering various articles, they at length departed, and a drive through the park completed the business of the morning. On returning, Frank, with an air of more than usual gravity, addressed his wife with, 'I hope, Eliza, you did not purchase any thing?'

"'I was not likely to do that without money.'

"'Pshaw! you understand me; you did not order any thing?'

"'I did *not*, Major Templeman,' returned the wife, to Maria's astonishment.

"'Thank you, my dear,' said Frank; 'it was very considerate of you, for you know how cursedly out of cash I am; things will be better by-and-by.'

"'Of course,' said the lady, 'as there

is a war we have a right to expect promotion.'

"At this moment Maria's millinery was announced, and the major, perhaps desirous of changing a subject, which did not display the sensibility of his Eliza to advantage, insisted on seeing Maria's purchases. A large packet was brought in, and a part of it directed to Mrs. Templeman.

"'This is come by mistake, I suppose,' said the husband.

"'My dear, *dear* Templeman, you shall see what it is; I think I never saw a more interesting dress and most amazingly cheap, so I just allowed her to send it, because I thought you might like to see me in it.'

"'But, my dear Eliza, as I told you this morning, I have no money, and—and, in short, my love, you have so many white gowns that—'

"'Oh, 'tis all very well, Major Templeman; all very right undoubtedly to

remind me of my wedding dresses; when I wore them, I looked divinely in white, for I was *then* beloved, I was *then* —'

"'My dear Eliza, if you want the gown, take it, but I tell you the truth I cannot pay for it.'

"'You always talk so much of paying,' said Miss Belford, 'just as if that was of the least consequence; any person would believe you to have been born in Cheapside, if they did not know you.'

"Words arose upon words, till Frank grew seriously angry; but he checked his passion, and observed to his sister, 'Ah, Maria! I was always a petulant brat, I know not whether my mother or you bore with me the most, but I am aware that no other two women will ever do the same.'

"Eager to catch him in the moment of softness, the gown was again brought forward, and the matter ended by Maria presenting it to her sister-in-law, and Frank promising a similar one to his; as

she observed, 'that before Eliza's marriage they were always dressed alike; and this important point once settled they all departed for the opera.

"The specimen of one day may suffice for many; the ladies were uninformed, unprincipled, vain, petulant, and though alike in character, yet never united in sentiment, except when they sought to subdue the little prudence and foresight which yet remained to poor Frank, over whom the heart of Maria continually mourned and strove in vain to succour. The perseverance of ignorance and cunning, the perpetual bickerings of cold-hearted selfishness, wear down resolution, and finally destrov all resistance and energy.

"For a considerable time Frank endeavoured to pass himself off to Maria, in the character of a happy husband; but he was ill formèd to act a part; the virtues and the faults of his nature alike forbade dissimulation, for he was both ingenuous

and passionate. At length, therefore, the deep chagrin, the embarrassed circumstances, and, above all, the bitter consciousness that Maria alone loved him, subdued the pride, and overcame the firmness, with which he had hitherto rather covered, than concealed his sufferings. Finding himself alone with Maria, he confessed, in the most affecting manner, the folly of his conduct, the disappointment he experienced in the heartless and uninformed wife he had chosen, and the terrible state of his affairs, which every hour became more involved from the exorbitant interest he was paying for temporary relief.

"Maria could only weep over an exposure of circumstances which went far beyond her fears, for her ignorance of expense in London had prevented her from seeing her brother's expenses in the enormous light they now appeared in; but this explanation at once opened her eyes to the ruin which surrounded him

for whom she had ever felt such tender regard, and been urged so strongly to assist, and her mind was overpowered by the sorrows which lay before him.

" But it was neither by the language, nor the tears of sympathy, that the major could be assisted, nor had he declared his wants, till the pressure of distress compelled him to seek aid from Maria. Loan after loan was advanced, one payment succeeded by another, until even her generous spirit started from the sacrifice; and aware that she could not see him suffer and refuse him aid, she at length named a day on which she had determined to return home.

" Frank saw her motive, and his heart bled for the cause, but it happily roused him to a resolution worthy of an honest man. He declared his intention to join his regiment immediately, then in barracks in the west of England, and of course to dispose of his house and carriage.

"Maria had hoped, that at this juncture, some of Mrs. Templeman's vaunted connections, would have offered herself and sister a temporary home, but they all hung aloof, and the ladies condescended to insinuate, 'that they could endure the country in summer, even at her remote residence;' but pliant as she had proved herself, Maria would not at their call express a feeling foreign to her heart; she replied,' 'that undoubtedly her brother, would be happy to see them on his return, she considered herself no more than a visitor in *his* house.

"Mrs. Francis and her sister finding no better resource, departed with the major; pleasing themselves with the idea of their superiority in the country quarters to which they retreated, and alternately consulting or disputing, on the style of beauty and of dress, it was proper to assume on the occasion.

"Mortified and heart-stricken, Maria returned to her solitary home; all her

reflections on this ill-fated journey were of a nature to wound her feelings in detail, yet leave her without one general consolation. She was now stripped of all that part of her fortune which she could command, yet what good had she effected? What blessing secured by the sacrifice? Her beloved Frank was neither exalted to honour, nor even saved from disgrace. She could not call on the spirits of her departed parents to smile upon her work, nor expect that her brother would rise in proportion to his present depression; for although adversity might teach the lessons of prudence, they could not restore to him the prospect of happiness.

"Yet, as it is the nature of youth to be sanguine, and Maria was still romantic in her views of life, no wonder that she endeavoured to extract some sweets from the bitter cup thus mixed for her, by ill-directed generosity, and blind affection; there was, alas! no longer any disparity

between her and Montague; he might now look to her with confidence, and she might accept him without blame, and sweet would be the humble lot they should share together. Fancy presented many a fairy scene of rural beauty; the white-washed parsonage-house, where the tendrils of the vine and woodbine, contended the honour of adorning walls sacred to connubial bliss, now rose before her eye. Here would the lessons of piety and wisdom, the effusions of poetic fire and increasing love, flow from the lips of Montague; and *here*, would her hand clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, from her frugal, but well conducted store. But, alas! even in the very bosom of retirement, and without any visible change of situation, Maria soon found that the want of money to one habituated to the pleasures it procures, is not an ideal evil. Though unused to extravagance and self-denying to no common degree, Maria, as the mistress of a house,

was habitually liberal, and her charities comprehended every sufferer within her circle. She was now compelled to retrenchments which brought the blush of shame to her cheek, and denials which wrung her heart with sorrow; for not only did her principles forbid her to contract debt, but the miseries she had witnessed in consequence of such conduct, inspired her with a dread of it which amounted to horror.

"Such changes could not but be noticed; her relation strictly questioned her as to the cause; and although Maria was loath to draw down blame on Frank, whose sorrows in her own eyes obliterated his errors, she was yet too ingenuous and sincere, to keep back any part of the truth, from one who really loved her, and had a kind of parental right to enquire; of course, the burdensome secret was fully though slowly revealed. Alas! to Maria confession brought no relief; the old lady bitterly inveighed against Frank,

and not only blamed her for saving him from consequences his extravagance merited, but condemned her for injustice towards her eldest brother, a cowardly and deceitful deficiency of confidence in herself; and, to crown her invectives, taunted her with having lost for ever the power of rewarding Montague with her hand.

"Maria had ever imagined, (and with good reason,) thas this person was averse to her connection with poor Montague; and she heard this part of her denunciation with a sensation those only can conceive who behold the prospect of happiness brought close to the eye, to the very touch, and then snatched away for ever. She concluded, that during her absence, the virtues and talents of Montague had made that impression on her relative, which in her own opinion they were so well calculated to produce; and in the words, 'rewarding Montague,' a new world seemed to open on her eye,

from which her sense of female decorum, the usages of society, the exordiums of this very lady, and the cares of Francis, had hitherto excluded her. If it had soothed her harassed spirit to contemplate a life of comparative poverty and exile from the world, as dear, when shared by Montague, ah! how far more delightful would it have been to repair the wrongs of fortune, to place a man of worth and genius in the path of fame. 'Might I then have married him unblamed? and could he have permitted me to be the happy means of blessing him?' What a question for a heart so generous, so attached as that of Maria, and what an answer to hear that it was lost to her for ever.

" The agonies which now pressed upon her bosom, compelled her to seek for refuge, in some distant undefined hope of future good, and in retracing the probable consequences to Frank of her refusal to assist him, she convinced her-

self that with the promises she had made to her parents, her own sense of affection towards him, and the violence of his temper, should her unkindness have driven him to despair, she could not have acted otherwise; and thus reasoning, she stilled rather than removed the *reproaches* of her heart, so far as respected Montague, but its *sorrows* could not be alleviated.

" This faithful lover was now the tutor of the two younger sons of that nobleman who already had employed him, and who at some far distant period intended to reward him; his situation was honourable, but far from happy; but it was balm to his heart, and fuel to his hopes, to learn that Maria had returned to the country, and that her life was now even more retired than usual.

" Maria was now schooled, advised, and tormented, in one way or other by her relation, in a manner which rendered her life almost insupportable, and she be-

gan seriously to cast about for the means of removing, at least for a short time, from the scene of her sufferings, where for eighteen months she had been left to the most cruel reflections by Francis, without attention, or gratitude, when one day she was at once broke in upon by him and all his family, to which was now added an infant boy.

"Frank had undoubtedly cogent reasons for preferring this sudden mode of visiting his sister, to a more regular one, and it had at least the effect of lighting up her countenance with the smiles of welcome. Maria could not behold him again in her father's house, that house where his youth had been reared in unbounded tenderness and indulgence, and where his cheerful voice had been the harbinger of pleasure, the consoler of suffering, without feeling her old predilections muster round her heart. For a few hours Frank himself partook these emotions also; he pointed out the scenes

of his early exploits to his listless, cold-hearted wife, spoke of Maria's early love, her care, contrivances, and even courage, as manifested for his sake; and while he descanted on them, could not help observing how much the rose had faded in her cheek, and the fine roundness of her form was shrank since they had parted.

"But although Frank saw this, it yet made little impression; for the 'still small voice' of conscience is soon silenced in the breasts of those who accustom themselves to seek only for ease or gratification, and fly from the evil, with which it is their duty to contend; and the acuteness of the major's feelings, was with him a constant reason for stifling them, in the first moments of their existence.

CHAP. IV.

> the fatal time
> Cuts off all ceremonies and vows of love,
> And ample interchange of sweet discourse.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

"TIME had made little change and no improvement, in either of the ladies who now interrupted the melancholy monotony of Maria's existence. Mrs. Templeman's late seclusion from a gayer sphere, had added sourness of temper to inanity of mind; and her sister, whose disappointments had probably been many, had likewise gained an increase of petulance, which her sense of dependence alone restrained. The child which soon awoke the affections of Maria was not endued with the power of exciting them in any other person, except the father, and he

appeared rather to be angry with his wife for her apathy, than sensible of much feeling himself on this interesting subject. The poor babe was therefore consigned wholly to the care of a nurse-maid, who treated him as the maids of such mistresses usually do.

"The charm of a new situation was speedily evaporated, and the ladies became impatient for excursions to the various objects of beauty in its neighbourhood: 'we will go to such a lake, or we will visit such a curiosity, for perhaps somebody will be there,' was now heard from day to day, and every such excursion to seek that *somebody*, which constituted the only charm of the place, was accompanied by expense to Maria, and she unhappily knew at this time the evils of expense; her heart, once so free; her hand, ever so open, now shrunk reluctantly from such demands, and her sense of justice awoke indignation towards such ungrateful inmates, foreign

to her temper, and destructive to her peace and self-composure.

" As she was one day struggling to repress this new and tormenting guest, Miss Belford, who stood at the window, plucking from mere wantonness of destruction the flowers of the jessamine from the stems, suddenly exclaimed,

" ' Bless my life, there's a man, I mean a gentleman coming down the avenue — pshaw! 'tis only the curate I suppose — he is a decent creature however.'

" Maria looked up, her cheek reddened, her lip quivered; every vestige of her late anger was forgotten, and even the memory of its cause. A single glance had shown her Montague Thornton, and shown her too, that the only passion which ever animated her gentle heart still influenced it, in despite of absence, sorrow, and the many vexations, fears, and inquietudes that had of late oppressed it.

"Montague's answering looks soon re-assured Maria, as to the first source of apprehension an engaged heart is conscious of; she felt that she was beloved, felt that through every country and in every society, her image had travelled with him, an enshrined and sainted guest, never exposed to vulgar eyes, or worshipped with vulgar sacrifice, but tenderly revered as the object of fond respect, the reward of virtuous constancy.

"Montague was now in the zenith of his personal attraction, but Maria had suffered materially in her's, sorrow and a nearly hopeless passion, had cast a damp over her spirits, and mildewed the bloom of life and youth; but even this pensive air rendered her more endearing to the enthusiast, who had ever wooed the muse of melancholy, and whose modest hopes were flattered by the past anxieties of her whom he sought to interest. Every conversation he enjoyed, every call he made, confirmed his early wishes, and

added stability to the perfect esteem he felt for the character and talents of her he loved; but the company in which he ever found her, and, in fact, the vigilance with which she was guarded, prevented him from pouring out the ardours of his soul in the language of a lover.

"Maria became so happy in his presence, that she almost forgot that she had ever suffered; the sunshine which illumes a dark day, seems of tenfold brightness, and the words, the looks, the very presence of Montague diffused a halo round her existence, which communicated itself to every thing connected with her; she no longer perceived the ill-humour of the ladies, their insipidity and inconsistency were forgotten; even the bloated looks and devotion of Francis to the bottle, which had recently alarmed her, was forgotten also; all were now good, amiable, and right, for all were delighted when Montague entered, and sorrowful when he departed.

"A month had passed with the swiftness of an hour, when Montague was suddenly called to London by his father, who had gone thither a few day before, on some of those many errands which the multiplicity of his affairs induced. From the time of his departure it was observed, that the Major's spirits sunk and in a few days he announced his intention of departing also; observing that he had received a letter from Montague Thornton, whose father had been sending him on some foolish errand into Ireland; 'so that,' continued he, 'there's no saying when he may be here again, and the country is so cursedly dull without him, there's no enduring it any longer.'

"Maria could not help remembering how long he had caused her to endure it without Montague, and with what coolness he had ever commented upon her distant prospects of happiness with him.

She could not be sorry for the removal of a family which had added so much to her cares and expenses, and she wished for leisure to live over again the society of which she was now deprived, for an indefinite period.

"These thoughts were interrupted by the sudden arrival of a summons to Francis to join his regiment, then in the West Indies without an hour's delay. The Major was naturally brave and aspiring, and it was by no means his own fault that he had been hitherto only a fair-weather soldier; he therefore received the order in the first instant with joy, as the herald of promotion and honourable activity; but in a short time the recollection of the climate presented itself, and the two-fold danger checked the facility with which he arranged affairs for his departure, and he observed with a foreboding voice:

" 'That horrid yellow fever does not suit men of my complexion!'

" Maria shuddered, and the unbidden tear rose to her eyes in despite of her endeavours.

" Mrs. Templeman looked in the glass, and 'thanked God that her complexion was no worse for the northern air,' adding 'I have been told that really fair people would not tan even in the Indies.'

" 'Will you try, my dear,' said Frank in a tone of great tenderness, 'I am sure Maria will take charge of our poor little boy.'

" The affectionate sister readily assented.

" 'You are very obliging,' said the wife, 'indeed for that matter, I always intended to leave him with you; but as to my going to Antigua it is quite out of the question; who knows but I might be drowned, or perhaps die of the fever myself—'tis shocking to talk of such things; if it were to the East Indies,

you were going, Major Templeman, it would be a different affair, for their gold muslins are enchanting wear, and what could be more delightful than lying in a splendid palanquin? Then too, you get otto of roses as cheap as lavender water, and have servants to —'

"Frank rose, crossed the room with hasty strides, and, taking Maria's hand, cast his eyes first on her, and then on the place where they were sitting. It was a favourite parlour of his mother's, where oft his earliest lessons had been taken, and the earliest strawberries plucked to reward his labours. 'Here, and here only,' said he, in a suffocated voice, 'have my feelings been read, my wants anticipated.' The tears were in his eyes, and he pressed the hand he held to them and to his lips; and then, as if stung by some recollection too terrible for endurance, flung it suddenly from him and turned away.

"Miss Belford was fashionably infected

by the folly of her day, a dread of all the insect tribe; and she exclaimed instantly,

"'Oh dear! What's the matter? What do you see?'

"'Nothing; *nothing*, I tell you.'

"'Then I am sure you *feel* something, Major?'

"Frank groaned deeply and flung away. He did, indeed, feel all the bitterness of disappointment, anger, and contempt; for both the women who had conspired to aid his ruin, and desert him in the hour of trial. He felt, too, the value of that sister whose sustaining hand had alone been held out to him and his little one, notwithstanding all the injuries he had done her.

"The Major traversed the grounds with those perturbed steps which mark the more perturbed heart; but he had only gone a short distance, ere he was summoned to the house, from the arrival

of two persons who wished to see him on urgent business.

"In about a quarter of an hour, Maria was sent for, to the room where the Major was closeted with his unexpected guests. On entering, she perceived two persons, apparently an attorney and his clerk; the table was covered with papers, and Frank was leaning with his head against the chimney-piece, apparently absorbed and overwhelmed with wretchedness.

"He started, as she closed the door, and advancing, said, 'Maria, I am almost distracted, my creditors, hearing that I was ordered out, have seized the moment to distress me, and I am followed here by demands which must be immediately satisfied. I have property to pay all, but no time to see after it. In short, there is no means but from the sale of my commission, a circumstance,' added he, with a look almost of con-

vulsive horror, 'that I never, *never*, will survive.'

"A heart-rending sigh was all that Maria could offer in answer.

"'Did you ever hear of a Templeman who was a poltroon, a coward, Maria? Do you think that, if George was here, he could bear to see his father's son so stigmatised?'

"'But he is not here; my aunt, too, is far distant, and I have no money.'

"'But I want no money; if you would sign these bonds and accept these bills, Maria, I might yet be saved; it would gain time for the disposal of my horses, the receipt of my pay; in short, it would save me. But I cannot ask you. What would I not give that I had never injured you—*you*, the mother both of my boy and of his wretched father.'

"The language of penitence is often incoherent, but effective in its appeal to the heart. Maria did not forget past sufferings, nor could she forget the lately

awakened hopes, the long cherished wishes of her heart; but she saw also, most clearly, that the character of Frank, and too probably his life, did really hang on the issue of the hour, and to these claims she united, from long association, the honour of a spotless name, including even that of the far distant representative of an ancient house. She remembered, in short, all claimants on her, save herself; and, with a trembling hand, she signed all the papers offered to her by the man of law, when he had solemnly assured her that, if the worst were to happen, they would not exceed the powers of her own fortune to answer.

"Frank had not finished thanking her, assuring her of her safety, anathematising the follies which had led him into such difficulties, when the carriage which was to bear him thence (perhaps for ever) was announced. The transports of grief he suffered at this dreadful moment defy description. They called on Maria for a

new exertion, and, sensible his circumstances, fame, and happiness, all depended on his immediate departure, she used every means to soothe his mind and awaken his energies. He at length drove off, and a chilling calm succeeded to a terrific storm. The child alone remained, to seek compassion for itself and forgiveness for its unhappy father.

"A hasty line, written at the moment of embarkation, informed her that her brother had departed. A short and formal enquiry after the child evinced that its mother remained, and again there was silence in Maria's dwelling; but the calm was portentous, and the unhappy inhabitant trembled as she thought of the return of her relative, who could not fail to reproach her, although she was aware that the late distresses of Frank were precisely such as she would herself have relieved, being deeply embued with that family pride so peculiar to all those who spring from these northern counties.

" Too soon was poor Maria compelled to desire the presence of the very person she dreaded. The bills she had accepted were become due, and she was not only without cash to take them up, but ignorant of the means by which it was to be procured. From day to day she expected the arrival of that money which her brother had assured her would liquidate these debts; but finding it did not arrive, she wrote to her sister in the most urgent terms, intreating her to forward all the cash in her power, and to inform her how she was to proceed in a case of such extreme distress and difficulty.

" After some days of intolerable suspence, she was informed by Miss Belford, that Major, now Colonel Templeman, had indeed, left some effects, which according to his orders, had been converted into ready money, but they only produced a few hundreds, which her sister could not think of parting with, as she was obliged to pay ready money in a strange place,

and it would be some months before the income arising from her settlement would be paid, and Miss Templeman was probably aware that it was the only dependence of her unfortunate sister.

"The cold-hearted insolence, and wicked injustice of this letter precluded reply; she had no means of enforcing restituton, but while she wept over the distresses of her situation, it was con soling to her to believe that poor Frank, at least intended to repay her so far as it was in his power; but this could not alter her situation which every hour became more embarrassing; she had no one to advise her, or even soothe her; Montague was still in Ireland, and even had he been at home, could not have been to her the friend she wanted, it was not alone her mind that called for consolation; the activity of business, the possession of money was called for.

To add to her troubles, the little boy who had alone power to divert her from

perpetual solicitude, was now seized with the measles, and her apothecary judging them of a virulent kind, desired she would send to the next market town for a physician. On this gentleman's inspection of his little patient, he immediately pronounced him in imminent danger; Maria forgetful of every other sorrow, devoted herself entirely to him, and never quitted his chamber for a moment.

"When the doctor paid his third visit, the sands of life were running to their final close, and so distressing was the approach of death in the person of the infant sufferer, that the medical gentleman intreated, almost insisted, on Maria's quitting a scene which condemned her to an excess of useless suffering. He took her hand, and led her down stairs into the little parlour we have mentioned, and observing that on entering it, she became still more pale, he offered her his arm, and she went into the adjoining

flower garden for air, as she felt almost on the point of fainting.

"Maria and her conductor were slowly proceeding up a gravel walk, when two men entered a door of the garden, of a very different description to its usual visitants. Maria looked at them, but before she had time to make any observation, one of them advanced, and after pronouncing her name, declared her his prisoner.

"Maria fell senseless on the path; the physician examined the writ, and with equal surprise and compassion, perceived the legality of the action; then carrying her gently into the house, he laid her upon a sofa, and whilst he applied the usual remedies, prevailed upon the bailiff and his follower, to remain in an adjoining room.

"Maria at length opened her eyes, to learn the extent of that misery, which appeared to her the acmé of human suffering, not aware of the far greater de-

gree of it experienced by various classes of our fellow creatures. The child was now dead, and four writs were out against her; the remainder of her fortune was secured on land, her brother's agent always sent her the interest, and it was all gone some weeks before, in defraying the extraordinary expenses of her late visitants.

"Maria had no other idea on her mind, but that she must be carried to prison, the ignominy of which constituted its greatest hardship, being anxious to hide herself and her situation in the deepest obscurity. This supposition escaping her in a few vague words, the physician informed her, that if she could send for any other housekeeper who would join him, they would be bail for her, in which case, 'she would neither be obliged to quit her home, or do any other thing derogatory to her name and situation.'

"As he spoke, he looked earnestly in her wondering eyes, repeating the

words, 'any housekeeper will do, undoubtedly some of the tenants on this estate will be willing to come forward.'

" 'Tenants! oh, yes! all, all,' cried Maria, bursting into a flood of salutary tears: remembrance of the love evinced for her from early infancy by all her humble neighbours; the respectability in which her father and forefathers had lived and died; the justice, integrity and liberality which had been wont to reign in that mansion, all rushed to her mind, and pressed her heart to very breaking. She felt as if she had been the first to pollute the abode of her ancestors, by bringing these unhallowed guests; and, her mind weakened by the miseries which had accumulated around her, saw in her sorrows only guilt, and forgot that she was 'sinned against, not sinning.'

"Well might Maria exclaim, '*all, all*,' for not one tenant on that estate would have known her sorrows without flying to her relief, and many an honest heart

had already sympathised with that unknown cause which had altered 'poor Miss in her looks, and pinched her in her kind way.' Their present assistance was not, however, wanted; for her relative arrived at this very juncture, and prevented application to any other person. At the sight of her, Maria again relapsed into a death-like swoon, and during her insensibility, the circumstances in which she now stood were explained by the physician, who was no farther acquainted with her family affairs than as they had unhappily transpired that morning.

"The old lady had no doubt where the original sin of the business laid, but she said nothing more on the subject. Bail was given to one creditor, money to another, and every means used to assuage the anguish of Maria, whose mental agonies had already produced a nervous fever, which for many weeks threatened alternately the loss of reason or of life.

During this period no cares were left untried by Mrs. Allanson (her aunt) for her recovery, and the essential services she now rendered her, by awakening the gratitude and stimulating the exertions of the invalid, proved more effectual in restoring her, than even the skill of her wise and compassionate physician.

"As Maria emerged from this sickness, and found herself called back to life and its active duties, she felt some consolation gradually arise in her heart from remembering that Montague loved her; from believing, that Montague could forgive her: she saw, indeed, too clearly, that unprovided as he still remained, and unportioned as she had made herself, their union was impossible. Maria was no longer in her teens, she knew now that love and a cottage were imcompatible with the habits and wants of either; she was herself become an invalid, both had been educated and brought up to the possession of all the elegancies of

life; and although Montague was in himself poor, he yet lived with the wealthy and the great, partaking all their luxuries; no, they were both capable of foregoing much, yet they could not give up all to plunge themselves into the extreme of poverty; to increase those embarrassments already so oppressive, would be worse than folly or than madness, for it would be criminal; 'no! they could not marry, but surely they might love!'

"The very evening on which, for the first time, the languid invalid had ventured into her breakfast parlour, and was endeavouring to arrange her plans for the future (in the absence of her relative, who still kindly visited her every day,) her equanimity was again overthrown, and every throbbing pulse called into action, by the information given by a domestic, that Mr. Montague Thornton was driving down the avenue.

"The servant had scarcely left the room when Montague himself entered

unannounced; the abruptness of his appearance, the paleness of his face, the wild and haggard gaze of his eye, and the tremulous motion of his lips, all bespoke an agitation beyond what any sympathy even for her sufferings, as connected with her late illness, could inspire, and she felt as if a new stroke, worse than of death, was suspended over her.

"Montague was unable to speak, and every effort he made seemed only to rivet the chain that hung upon his powers of articulation; at length his mind fell prostrate before the uncontrollable emotion which paralysed his powers, and he wept like an infant.

"To see Montague thus moved, might well be supposed likely to subdue the little strength Maria had so lately acquired; but ever accustomed to think more of others than of herself, and forgetful of every thing but the sorrows of the only man she had ever loved; no

wonder that she arose, and taking his hand, assured him of her sincerest sympathy in whatever had befallen him; alas! sympathy was, indeed, all she now could offer.

" Montague by a gentle pressure, acknowledged that he felt that hand, but he relinquished it in a moment, and in that action Maria read something more mysterious, and even more terrible than she had yet conceived, and for which all her previous reasoning on the subject had but ill prepared her; she looked with eyes of alarmed inquiry in the face of her lover.

" ' Do not gaze on me, Maria, or at least look not so kindly; I am a wretched being, unworthy of your care, I come to sue only your pity, your forgiveness.'

" ' I do pity you, Montague, whatever be your sorrows; but forgiveness you can never claim from me, whom you never offended.'

" ' Forgive my presumption; I have,

indeed, no right, — no engagement, — no — oh, pardon my distraction, I am alike wretched in believing that I could inspire you with affection; or that I was unequal to that happiness: I know not what I would say, but now that I am come to bid you an eternal farewell; I may surely be allowed to presume on something more than common regard.'

"'Farewell! regard!' articulated Maria, as she retreated; and sunk in death-like paleness on her seat.

"'Oh! I was not mistaken;' cried Montague with frantic eagerness; 'yes, Maria, you pity; nay, unworthy as I am, you *love* me.'

"Maria assented, 'she had loved him many years, he knew it, but why should she repeat it?'

"How was this declaration received? In sorrow so vehement, in anguish so intense and overwhelming, that it was evident some terrible necessity was indeed about to separate them for ever; and the

streaming tears of Maria proved how unequal she was either to consoling his grief, or concealing her own. Her agony recalled that spark of manly pride of endurance his sorrow had almost extinguished; and in her affliction he learnt the necessity of subduing himself for her sake. He arose from his knees, besought her to pardon his transports, and promised he would command himself sufficiently to tell his sad story, if she had the power to listen to him.

"By a violent effort, Maria replied, 'That she was impatient to hear him; and aware that the sooner this distressing interview was over, the better for them both.'

"Yet Montague paused long ere he could begin; the late transports of his grief, and his despair, had been called out by an excess of anguish beyond the powers of nature to sustain; and he remained exhausted, but unrelieved. He

was accustomed to restraint, and, by nature, more subject to shed a silent tear in solitude, than to expose, even to a kindred mind, the agitations of an hour like this; and shame for having so betrayed them was added to his other painful sensations. His story too involved the errors of a parent, whom, with all his faults, he loved, and towards whom he had ever practised the most duteous obedience. At last, in a hurried, and sometimes inarticulate voice, he commenced his heart-rending narrative.

" 'When I left the neighbourhood so suddenly, it was in consequence of a letter from my father, urging me to come to him immediately, on business of the utmost importance. I obeyed; but surely you are aware how much my mind was occupied with other objects. On arriving in London, I found my father in high spirits, being engaged in the purchase of a tract of land in Ire-

land, on which he was reckoning with his usual ardour. This place he was desirous of sending me to, to examine and purchase; and my utmost endeavours proved ineffectual to divert him from the scheme. I was furnished with money for the purpose, letters to agents and bankers, and finally, after a few days driven off in spite of my protestations.

" 'These days were almost entirely spent with my father at the house of a rich merchant, with whom he appeared on the most friendly terms; in fact, there was a degree of intimacy and confidence between them which surprised me; but I made little observation on the subject, for my thoughts were with far different society.'

" Maria sighed deeply.

" 'During my stay in Ireland, a thousand inconveniencies and delays perpetually took place, which prolonged my stay; yet all in that unexpected manner which disqualifies you from guarding

against them. At this time I heard of your brother's unexpected embarkation, and became more impatient to return. Then, the news of your illness followed; and I broke through all my trammels; but, on arriving in London, I was informed of your convalescence; and satisfied on that head, I consented to defer my journey.'

"Again Montague paused: the dreadful task he had undertaken seemed to accumulate in difficulties, the farther he proceeded; and his voice became more broken and feeble as he added:

"'It is impossible to tell you all; my father, my only parent, who is now become an aged man, was in great distress: he had borrowed money of Mr. Freeman, the merchant of whom I spoke; or at least Mr. Freeman had been bound for him, and was likely to suffer greatly, — and — and —'

"'Has this merchant a daughter, Montague?'

" 'He has an only daughter, a mere child, who left school the very first day I dined there.

" 'I will spare you a recital so distressing to us both.'

" 'I see — yes! I see it all.'

" 'No, no, Maria; you cannot see it all: you can never know my struggles, my protestations; but when I beheld my father actually in prison; when I saw his grey hairs rolled in the dust; when, in the agony of shame and distress, with a loaded pistol in his hand, he called on me as the minister of Christ, to save his soul from the perdition it was on the point of braving! how could I refuse to sacrifice myself, if — if *you* consented?

" 'Alas, Maria! I could not even plead engagement: I had no acknowledged right in you. Yet, surely, if ever heart whispered heart in the language of pure affection and sincerity of faith, that intercourse was ours; it was not the lan-

guage of presumption when I asserted that you *had* a right in me which I could not dispose of, and ——'

"Maria wept anew with increased emotion.

"'Dear, dearest Maria, ever noble and generous, we cannot, *cannot* part.'

"'Yes, yes; we must part. Urge me not, Montague, to a history of error and of sorrows on my side, as painful and decisive as your own. I have no power to save *you*; endeavour, therefore, to preserve your father.'

"Again she wept in the arms of Montague; then suddenly tearing herself from him, she rushed to her chamber, which she fervently wished she might never quit again. Towards morning, the violence of her sorrow being somewhat subdued, she compelled herself to write a note to Montague, in which she entreated him not to seek another interview, as she was convinced it was better

for them both to part without it; she entreated him to remember the awful duties in which he was engaged, and the important ones into which he was entering; and concluded with saying, 'Endeavour, dear Montague, so to act, that I may never blush for the preference avowed *now*, to be named *no more*.'

"Ten thousand times did Maria repeat these words to herself. Often did she wonder that, considering him as the husband of another, there was need to repeat them to her heart; but as often did his form, his words, his sorrows, rise up before her, and compel her to behold, to commiserate, and to love him.

"During this whole day she never unclosed the shutters of her window; nor did she even admit her daily visitant; but, on the following she stationed herself, with the first beam of day, to watch the carriage which would take Montague away, as it traversed the distant road. She

saw it, and could perceive the wretched traveller stretch out his head, and to the latest moment gaze upon her dwelling. At length all traces of Montague vanished, and Maria closed her eyes, and felt the world a desart.

CHAP. V.

Better I were distract,
So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,
And woes, by strong imagination, lose
The knowledge of themselves.

SHAKSPEARE.

"As the creditors of Francis, or rather those of Maria, had heard that she had been down stairs, they concluded that their patience and politeness had been sufficiently shown, and the sorrows of a love-lorn heart were forcibly exchanged for those of an embarrassed creditor. There is little sentiment, but much suffering, in bonds and bills, and many a new pang, distinct from those she suffered for the loss of Montague, but scarcely less acute, did Maria now endure; but, being determined to adjust all her pecuniary affairs, by the assistance and knowledge

of the severe, yet efficient relative, she was finally enabled to do it, and to find herself possessed of sixty pounds a-year, the sole remains of her once liberal fortune.

"Deeply penetrated with her misfortunes, though still angry with the cause, Mrs. Allanson now entreated her to take up her abode entirely with her, and she so far complied as to shut up her brother's house and arrange all his affairs, and those of her late dependents with exactness and liberality, judging of him from her own heart. In this employment she gained such a portion of strength, as enabled her to endure the information of Montague's marriage with apparent composure, but as it was likely to fill the whole country with comments, and she was liable to new wounds from all who approached her, her relation, with much consideration in this point, determined on setting out to Bath.

"Here she received tidings of Frank,

who wrote in great spirits, but made no observations on the circumstances, which in the nature of things must have befallen her, and even adverted to the death of the child in a manner which indicated as little regret for the babe, as gratitude to her for the care of it. Maria had scarcely recovered her chagrin from this letter, when a new trouble assailed her; Montague and his bride were announced among the arrivals at Bath.

"As Maria never went out except to church, she hoped to escape meeting him, whom she now dreaded to see; and it did so happen, that once only did they cross each other's path, when the shrunken form, the ghastly complexion of Montague, struck her eye and withered her heart. — 'He is dying,' cried Maria, 'and I might have saved him,' ah! what a sentence of condemnation to such a heart as hers!

"Very shortly afterwards, she learnt that the young couple had left Bath,

'as the place disagreed with Mr. Thornton,' and she saw in this new proof of the delicacy and the sufferings of Montague; as however, it was a relief to her, she obeyed the injunctions of Mrs. Allanson, by going a little more out, and endeavouring to regain some portion of her former health and activity. She was happy in the little society she found here, for it was with sensible, good, and sympathetic people, who struck with her pensive, pale, but still lovely countenance, concluded that some sorrow of more common power had subdued her bloom, and blighted her mind, endeavoured to restore her to happiness. This they sought to effect by engaging her in works of benevolence, or exciting her to literary pursuits and pious contemplations, and by degrees drawing her out of herself, they led her again to seek confidence in heaven and peace, if not happiness on earth.

"This happy tendency to repose was continually thwarted by the irrascible

temper of her grand aunt, who from the moment that health began to revisit her cheek, seemed to consider life and strength restored, for no other purpose but to embitter the first, and subdue the second.

"Bad principles are undoubtedly the worst part of a character, but bad temper is the most tormenting, and perhaps it is the most astonishing proof of human weakness which exists amongst us, that there are so many people who allow themselves the constant exercise of this vicious propensity, who are not otherwise wicked and cruel. I have known both men and women, whose hearts melted at a tale of sorrow, whose benevolence sought to relieve every species of distress, (save that of their own inflicting,) that could yet, from day to day, tear the hearts of those who loved them, by the most taunting expressions, fly into the most intemperate sallies of anger, in which they reviled, or reproached, the most inoffen-

sive or affectionate person near them, or by cold petulance and scornful queries awakened the same passions in others. Even persons professedly religious, will not scruple to use cutting epithets and provoking allusions, and where they make it a matter of conscience to subdue the expression of rage, yet tease the whole day through, as if it were less sinful to murder peace by inches, than to destroy her by one blow. You must pardon me this digression, it is a point on which we are all so liable to err, 'that, line upon line, and precept upon precept,' is necessary to the best of us, especially those who have the cares of life to encounter, and the comforts of those dependent on us to consider, for power alone is apt to mislead us. I have seen many a man become a hard master, who was a kind and generous fellow-servant.

"To return to Maria, for two years she continued to drag on a cheerless ex-

istence, in a kind of genteel servitude, when she received the melancholy news of poor Frank's death, at the very time when she was looking for his return. She learned only, that he was among the victims to the yellow fever which at that time swept away numbers of our gallant countrymen, and that he was esteemed as a brave officer by his companions, and lamented by his men. His intermediate history from his departure from England to his death, embraced no prominent point; but there appeared no reason to suppose, that from the time of leaving his wife, his personal expenses had exceeded his pay, or that any person save his sister had suffered by him.

"These two years had been very differently passed by another dear to her heart. The union of Montague with Miss Freeman, was the contrivance of two needy fathers, each alike deceiving and deceived. Freeman passed with Thornton for a rich merchant. Thorn-

ton with him for a man of large landed property, and the distant situation of his estates prevented the case from being examined too minutely, from one who was anxious to prevent his own affairs from being scanned too narrowly. Freeman had only one child whom he tenderly loved, and whom he earnestly desired to place in distant security and affluence, with a virtuous young man, lest the fall of his house should overwhelm her in its ruin. Thornton looked to the portion of the merchant's daughter, as the means of redeeming his mortgaged acres at home, and perfecting the cultivation of his Irish purchase.

" It was by no means difficult to persuade Sophia Freeman, a young, pretty, sentimental girl, that the dark brilliant eye of Montague had pierced *her* heart; it was however, not only difficult but impossible to persuade Montague, that the fragile form and flaxen locks of Sophia had touched his; but when the actual

distress and unfeeling resolution of his father, at length extorted from him a promise of compliance, he was not thereby required to forfeit his integrity by professions of passion he did not feel, and of admiration to which he was a stranger. He was given to understand, that an unhappy girl was in love with him to such a degree that her father was willing to make any sacrifice for her peace, and, as the delicacy of the subject forbad conversation with the father beyond mere accordance with his wishes; Montague, satisfied that he intended no wrong, but was a victim to the happiness of others, became a mere machine in the hands of the designing.

"Sophia on her part was informed, that her lover was a studious, poetical, romantic young man, who could not *speak* of love, but thought the more, and whose high soaring reveries were above the conception of vulgar minds. Sophia determined not to be vulgar, and she

was delighted with the idea of having a romantic lover and a poet for her husband, and looked with some impatience for a copy of verses, which should extol her beauty and declare his adoration; as none were however presented even on the bridal morn, and a whole week passed without them, the young bride began to think she might as well do something like other people, and she therefore requested a trip to Bath.

"To find himself in the same place with Maria, to feel himself at once near her and parted for ever from her, was a trial to which the spirits of Montague were unequal; the courage which strong necessity had awoke, now gave way, and he sunk into a state of nervous despondency so distressing, as to awaken the fears and stimulate the endeavours of his young bride, who hurried with him to Bristol at the instance of her medical adviser.

"It was not in the nature of Monta-

gue to perceive the strong and increasing interest, with which he had really inspired this affectionate young creature, without feeling grateful for her kindness, and desirous of relieving her uneasiness; and though woe still sat heavy at his heart, though her very love perpetually reminded him of the superior attractions, the mind-illumined kindnesses of Maria, he yet struggled with his feelings, and in the endeavour to appear cheerful, sometimes conquered the sense of depression; he returned to London, in the opinion of Sophia every way improved, and had himself a satisfaction in her happiness, which is the inseparable reward of a benevolent exertion.

"It is not improbable that the strong attachment of Montague to literary pursuits, might have restored his mind to peace, with such a gentle, unoffending, though insipid partner, if circumstances had allowed him the enjoyment of learned leisure, and the exercise of those

sacred duties belonging to his profession. But alas! soon after his return, the bubble burst on which the speculating fathers had built. Freeman had offered a fortune of thirty thousand pounds with his daughter, to be paid from West India produce, which was to arrive in spring; in return, Thornton had settled lands on Sophia, mortgaged to their utmost value. Just as the West India fleet arrived, Freeman was made a bankrupt, and his share of the produce seized by his creditors, and at the same time Thornton's creditors learning the failure of *his* hopes, seized on all they could command, and openly consigned him to that destruction menaced for so long a period.

"The total overthrow of Freeman's house, opened such scenes of fraud, and exposed him to so much obloquy, that, together with the utter poverty to which he had consigned his child, proved too much for his reason to support, and he added the crime of self-destruction to

the ruin of others. Thornton did not follow his example (suicide is seldom the refuge of the aged); the affair was however fatal to him, and a few weeks after this general denouement terminated his busy, anxious, and embarrassed life.

"Happy would it have been if these perpetrators of mischief had been the only sufferers; the unhappy objects of their plot were now left to struggle with a world for which they were totally unprepared. Montague, overwhelmed by the disgrace attached to his father's name, was unable to make one effort to assist the unhappy wife and mourning daughter, now on the eve of becoming a mother. Of many respectable college connections, besides that of his noble patron, he might have availed himself; but stunned with the stroke, he fled from all society, and despair threw a veil over talents which, in a man of less acute sensibility

and better directed energies, might have been elicited by his misfortunes.

"One germ of good alone arose from this chaos of evil; an increased union of heart and intention in this unhappy couple. Montague could not behold his lovely young wife, hitherto nursed in the lap of plenty and paternal tenderness, thus exposed to 'poverty's cold winds and chilling rains,' without feeling for her the most lively emotions of compassion, and seeking by a thousand tender attentions to alleviate those sorrows he could not avert, and supply to her those offices of kindness, called for not less by her habits than her situation. Considering him as she had ever done, as a being of a superior order, no wonder that when he stooped to the offices of a nurse and an attendant, every mark of his kindness was received by her with a gratitude bordering on enthusiasm and a love that rose almost to idolatry; and cold, indeed, must the heart of Montague have been,

if the love of innocence, beauty, and misfortune, had not warmed at least to comparative affection.

"Of these affairs Maria heard in their course, soon after the death of Francis, and her heart was torn anew with the idea of Montague's sufferings, and she busied herself with discovering his actual situation. When at length this information was conveyed to her, it was accompanied by the assurance that he was departing immediately for Ireland, to take possession of a curacy procured for him by a person with whom he had become acquainted during his visit to that island, and who, on learning his distress, had with all the warm-heartedness peculiar to his country, thus busied himself to assist him.

"'Happy, oh! most happy man, who can assist Montague Thornton!' exclaimed Maria; and for a short time after this, she appeared occupied in her mind, and comparatively happy also; but she too

soon relapsed into an air of habitual care and melancholy musing; and the death of Francis, the final closing of her hopes respecting *him*, pressed upon her mind with all its first severity.

"In seasons of peculiar affliction (as I have formerly observed,) her relation was always kind; and she now endeavoured to amuse her by every means in her power, but in the country diversion is soon exhausted, and every new book, or old newspaper, was passed over, when it struck her to bring down a cabinet which she had purchased at the sale of Mr. Thornton's effects, but had not spoke of at the time, lest she should wound Maria by the mention of his name.

"It struck her at this time, that by drawing the attention of Maria to her former lover, she should weaken the sorrow which appeared to be exclusively given to the death of her brother; she therefore, without appearing to attach importance to it, placed the cabinet

before her, saying, 'she wished Maria would clear the drawers, which seemed full of old papers, which the servants had most probably collected from chimney-pieces, coat pockets, and writing desks.'

"Maria proceeded to her work mechanically, though the remembrance of Montague certainly arose upon her mind; she had none of that gossiping, prying spirit, called by way of distinction, 'female curiosity,' but which, I fear, is by no means confined to the female part of the species; she had, moreover, a high sense of honour, and a decided aversion to raking up the ashes of past errors, so that when her friend observed, 'there were probably many papers there, which would throw light on old Thornton's transactions,' it had no other effect than that of making her more speedily commit the papers to the flames, and many had already expiated their sins by fire, when the hand-writing of Montague caught her eye. To burn that was im-

possible, she therefore laid it aside, and each following address was looked at for the sake of examining characters of which she had seen few specimens, but those were in his early poetry, and still dear to her memory.

"In pursuing this object, she was surprised to find one letter addressed to Mr. Thornton, in the hand-writing of her brother Frank, the post mark of which proved that it had been written during his last visit to her. She knew that Frank had ever disliked Mr. Thornton, and she had never heard of any correspondence between them, but her surprise was far inferior to the grief thus awakened by this memento; she pressed the letter to her lips, she gazed on the well-known characters, and feeling that she had a sister's right in all that belonged it, proceeded to retrace those lines which, though probably written about some country sport, or other trifling subject, would yet be interesting

to her: judge what she felt on perusing the following lines.

" 'My dear Sir,

" 'A painful duty to two amiable people, impels me to require your immediate assistance in aiding me to save them both from ruin. Montague is now our daily visitor, and his passion for Maria is too evidently returned. I told you some time ago, that I could never consent to a marriage which I then thought imprudent on my sister's part; but I now tell you, with equal candour, that my regard for your son, dictates the same language. Maria has no longer a fortune that could contribute to his support; certain expenses to which the extravagancies of a life in town subject young people, and others on which I cannot dilate, have so far reduced her jointure as to deprive her of all ready money. I leave you to judge of the result of a marriage thus formed, between young people who have

been brought up as they have. I love Maria, I have a sincere regard for Montague; I know from experience the miseries resulting from embarrassed circumstances, nor are you a stranger to them; it is equally our duty to save objects so justly dear to us.

"'I am, &c. &c.'

"The eyes of Maria wandered again and again, over this letter, before she was capable of understanding it; a deadly soul-benumbing sense of horror seemed to freeze her faculties, and prevent her from comprehending the extent of that new source of heart-consuming sorrow which it opened for her. One thing alone she knew, and wished that she could cease to know; it was Frank, her beloved Frank, dear, open-hearted, noble Frank, who had basely calumniated her character, and torn her from the only human being who could have healed the wounds himself had made. Ah! my chil-

dren, if there is a pang above, beyond all other pangs, it is that which a feeling heart sustains on finding itself deceived where most it trusted.

"As the confusion of Maria's thoughts subsided, indignation for such unworthy conduct, remembrance of all the train of circumstances which followed the removal of Montague succeeded, and she considered herself the complete dupe of an artful, cruel, unprincipled man, who had sought not only to tear her from a lover to whom he well knew her heart was long and fondly attached, but from a friend, whose presence would have been a check to the further ruin he was then meditating. Scorn and anger dried the burning tears that stood upon her cheek, and she felt for a moment that she had cast away even Frank, from her heart for ever, and that his unworthy memory should never obtrude again to distress her.

"Before a single hour had flown, the

remembrance of his death so young, so far distant; of those sufferings which undoubtedly led him to adopt a line of conduct so foreign to his nature, again obtruded; she now saw in the fatal letter the true regard of one who really sought to guard her from the miseries he could appreciate but too justly; miseries which must have exceeded all that she had known, since they had driven him to conduct of which she was incapable.

"The first great lessons of Maria's life had taught her to obey and to forgive. Admirable lessons! yet fatal to her in their excess. She now sought rest for her harassed and perturbed spirit in the exercise of devout resignation; and humbly besought Him who alone readeth the heart, and traceth the springs and motives of conduct, to enable her to forgive *this* and every other injury. She sought too, with earnest supplications and tears, for pardon from her heavenly

father for her erring brother. True, he was beyond the efficacy of her prayers; but where is the human being who has wept over a departed friend that has addressed no prayer in his behalf? called for no blessing on his awful journey? I am no Roman Catholic, as you all know, but I have felt this desire so frequently myself, and so often witnessed it in others, that I have no hesitation in claiming for it an indulgence, which *is not* denied by our religion, and *is so natural* to every amiable and pious mind.

"But neither the tears and prayers, the resignation she practised, nor the palliation she sought, could erase from Maria's memory the knowledge she had thus acquired; every moment it rose to her recollection, and forbade the composure she sought. At length, as a means of removing it by subjects likely to give a strong bias to her mind, she determined on reading those letters of Montague's which she had found in the same cabinet.

"These, it appeared, had been written immediately before and after his marriage: they were often traced with a trembling hand, and in some places blotted by a tear, and displayed the struggles of a noble and heaven-instructed mind, torn by contending passions. From them she found that her situation was only known in part to Montague even then, as appeared by the following passage:

"'Whoever has told you that Maria has dissipated so much of her fortune as you speak of, is either himself deceived, or a base calumniator. She is incapable of selfish extravagance; she may have been the victim of guile, the dupe of her benevolence; but otherwise she would not err. Ah! had she not been far superior to me in fortune, I would still have sought to engage her in bonds from which you could not have torn me; but I submit: I will not reproach my father.'

" In another letter she read the following:

" ' Terrible as were the agonies of that moment when you made me the arbiter of your destiny; when not only my feelings as a son, but my principles as a minister of Christ, were employed to immolate all my earthly hopes; even then, had I believed Maria ruined, I never could have resigned her; more dear to me poor, houseless, and dependent, than ever, I would have besought her to accept my protection immediately. For her I could have worked for my bread; every thing excellent in my character, my attainments, would have been called into action. Her love would have awakened in me a new being; I should have arisen, and been a man.'

" In a letter, which appeared to be written after his marriage, she found these words:

" ' Why, my dear father, do you mention her name. I have set bounds to

myself, which I will not pass: my lips, my pen, shall trace that name no more: my heart is indeed full of it to very breaking; but I trust that God will accept my resolutions and prayers, distracted as they are, and preserve me from further wanderings. Sophia will ever find me kind and faithful to the utmost of my power; for never shall my eye seek that form which could alone divert it an instant from herself.'

"The embittering recollections, the agonizing grief awakened by these letters again wrought on Maria a sense of nervous irritability and weakness, which reduced her to the most distressing state of health; and she saw, when too late, how much more wisely she would have acted, in committing every vestige of her lover's sufferings to the flames unread. Perhaps this part of her history may be a hint to us all. I am decidedly of opinion that every confidential letter, which is not absolutely essential to be kept as a matter

of business, ought to be burnt as soon as we are masters of its contents. Many an old family feud has been revived, many a harsh expression taught to rankle in the heart when the writer or his correspondent has gone down into the dust. Among the living the mischief arising from servants reading letters, either carelessly left, or cautiously, yet insufficiently concealed, is incalculable; and even where the sense of honour is more expected and generally acted upon, it should be remembered that human nature is weak, and has a claim to guardianship from its fellow-creatures; our divine master has taught us to pray not only against evil, but temptation.

"To return to Maria. After struggling some time with her disorder, it was at length found necessary to send her to the sea; and as she determined to avoid all places of gay resort, a little fishing-town in Wales was pitched upon; and

there she went, accompanied by Mrs. Allanson, who knew, and approved of the place. Here the new and sublime scenes of nature, the salubrious breezes, the gentle dashing of the waves, the glorious expanse of the mighty deep, now first beheld by her, tended to soothe her mind, and awaken her imagination. Perhaps the very trouble and inconveniences, experienced among a people to whose habits and manners they were strangers, had also its effect in reviving her spirits and exciting her exertions, for she gradually regained her health and such a degree of cheerfulness, as enabled her to pay the most sedulous attention and grateful devoirs to her friend.

"A few nights previous to the time fixed upon for their return home, they were awakened by a terrible storm, which increased in violence till morning, and continued through the day. Various fishing boats were driven in, in great

distress; efforts were made for the preservation of others ineffectually, and confusion and distress prevailed in the place.

"Towards evening, a ship, supposed to be a packet, was seen struggling with the contending elements at a considerable distance, and from time to time, the faint flashes of her signal guns broke on the eye. Maria, eager to help and save, ran along the shore, enquiring if it were not possible to assist the sufferers; and, at length, by promise of what was deemed a great reward, induced two men to venture out; but before they had proceeded far, the object of her care at once disappeared from her sight, and the roaring waves rolled on, 'as she had never been.'

"Maria's heart sunk, and a shriek of horror issued from her lips. She covered her eyes; but in a few moments recollecting the poor men whom she had induced to set out on this fruitless service, and pursuing them with her eyes as well

as the increasing darkness permitted, she perceived another boat now riding on the foaming ridge, and now precipitated into the watery vale below; and seeing that her own men were making towards it, she justly concluded that it contained some survivors from the wreck she had witnessed. Hope and fear took full possession of her soul, and she continued to traverse the beach with hurried steps and straining eyes, and while thus employed became sensible that the furious blasts were now dying away, and the mountain waves began to remit their overwhelming fury.

"She now distinctly perceived her brave fellows evidently straining their utmost strength to near the little vessel, whose slight form every moment threatened with destruction; and, at length, it was declared by many gazers on, that their deliverers had reached them; but the increasing shades of night wrapt all in gloom; and Maria filled up the period

of suspense, which was also that of hope, by giving every order for the reception of the helpless strangers.

"Hastening again to the beach, she heard the dashing of the oars; the shout of welcome thrilled through her ear, and the long-forgotten tear of grateful pleasure sprung to her eye. Three seamen, a gentleman who was a passenger, together with a woman and a child, were snatched by her cares and bounty from inevitable destruction. On seeing her pay the fishermen, the men united, as well as they were able, in thanking her; but the female, drenched in water, helpless, and scarcely breathing, lay at the bottom of the vessel.

"Maria caused her to be raised with the utmost care, placed in a chair, and carried to her own lodgings. She took the child in her arms, and endeavoured to warm its chilled limbs by hugging it to her bosom, little conceiving that

her solicitude for this helpless being, was opening a new era in her life, and could close only with her existence.

CHAP. VI.

———— Broken with the storms of fate,
I come to lay my weary bones among you;
Give me a little earth for charity.

SHAKSPEARE.

"ALWAYS hospitable and charitable, Mrs. Allanson received Maria and the ill-fated guests who accompanied her, with real benevolence, and hastily assisted her servant in removing the wet wrappers of the stranger, and applying every comfort and restorative her case demanded.

"It was perceived that she was in deep mourning. Her form was slender, her skin delicately fair; and there was an air of gentility about her, which added to the interest her situation inspired; and it was with no common pleasure

they beheld the colour of her lips return, her eyes open, and the powers of life circulate through her exhausted frame.

"The first words uttered by the mother were an enquiry for her child, whom she clasped to her heart with all the strength her enfeebled frame allowed. Maria now besought her to take refreshment, to which she assented, and stretched out a hand and arm so thin, and of such deathlike paleness, that it was evident disease had ravaged her youthful form ere the storm had reached her; and that she had but obtained a temporary respite from the grave which had so lately menaced her.

"Maria gave up her own bed to the stranger, who happily sunk soon into that profound repose she so evidently wanted, though it possessed no restorative powers beyond the relief of the hour.

"On the following morning Maria stood at her bed-side, and, after various

kind enquiries, said, 'You will, I trust, remain some days with us before you proceed on your journey; but, in the mean time, if you have any friend to whom I could write, to inform them of your safety, I will do it with pleasure.'

" 'You are very kind; but I have no friend to whom writing will be of any use. I am going to Hallowdale, in Westmorland, where I hope to find one.'

" Maria started on hearing the name of her father's house.

" 'Do you know the lady who lives there?' said the stranger eagerly. 'Do you think she would receive and shelter a widow and her child?'

" 'There is no lady there now,' said Maria.

" 'No lady! what will become of me? Is Miss Templeman married? Is she dead?'

" 'Neither,' returned Maria; 'and if it were in her power—but, for heaven's

sake, tell me who are you that asks these questions?'

" 'My name is Thornton; I am the widow of——'

" 'Of Montague,' cried Maria, and sunk senseless on the bed over which she was leaning.

" When Maria was restored, when in retirement she had recalled her scattered thoughts and shed tears of tender sorrow, due to the memory of Montague, she left no means untried to soothe and re-assure the unhappy Sophia. She was now returning at nineteen, a widow, a mother, and a beggar, to her own country, where she had only one relation, the aunt of a mother who died in giving her birth, and whose ruin was so nearly involved in that of her father, that she was left with scarcely the means of bare subsistence. Happily for herself, the widow was far advanced in consumption, which had seized her at the time when her unhappy husband sunk into that grave

which was opened for him from his bridal hour. During the whole of his married life, he had so conducted himself, that the fond and inexperienced Sophia had believed herself truly beloved by him; and, supported by that belief, had encountered the sad changes incident to her loss of fortune with a cheerfulness a fortitude, unexpected by her husband, and gratefully estimated by him. But, alas! their abode was melancholy, their situation unhealthy; and shut out from all congenial society, unknown and unappreciated, his dearest hopes and modest expectations for ever blasted, the very powers of Montague's mind acted in opposition to his peace. The flow of his imagination, the vigour of his intellect, hastened his destruction; day after day he shrunk and withered, like a plant deprived of its natural aliment, and at length dropped without an effort, or a sigh.

"On the last day of his existence he

first allowed himself to speak of Maria; and having once permitted this indulgence, he could not resign it: he called her the 'friend of his youth, the benign being who consoled him for the loss of his mother, and who, if she yet lived (for he felt assured she was not married,) would succour his widow and little one, until the arrival of his brother from the East Indies;' he informed her, 'that on his first landing in Ireland, he had received a blank cover, containing fifty pounds, which he ever believed to have been sent by this valued friend, and considered it an earnest of her kindness to those who survived him.'

"Sophia, trembling with apprehension, or stupified by sorrow, was little able to draw conclusions from his words, farther than as they evinced solicitude for her future welfare; and even in the remembrance that his last breath was spent in invoking blessings for Maria, she considered them (as, indeed, they were),

connected with prayers for herself, and the only circumstance of consolation that remained to her, was the ardent hope of finding refuge with the friend of Montague.

"Being, by the provident care of her husband, provided with money for her immediate expenses, the widow lost no time in arranging her affairs for departure; but fatigue and sorrow so far had assisted the ravages of disease, that at the time of her embarkation she was wasted to a shadow; but, with the self-deception common to pulmonary complaints, she predicted confidently the return of health when she should regain her native air; and lamented that her youth forbade the hope of rejoining her beloved Montague for many, many years, during which she would be a mourner for his sake.

"Many interesting particulars, many heart-rending circumstances, did Maria learn from the youthful widow, relative to the only man she had ever loved, and

whom the grave seemed in some measure to have restored to her, since it permitted her to think of, and to lament him without reproach. Her kindness was dear to Sophia, who felt as if the hand of heaven had interposed in her behalf, by conducting her to the only human being she desired to see; but the severe cold she had sustained, soon produced an accession of fever, which rendered her immediate danger apparent to all around her.

"Her aunt was now summoned by Maria; she lived in the neighbourhood of London, and more than a week elapsed before it was possible for her to reach them; in fact, the poor woman only arrived in time to witness her departure; to behold Sophia place her child in the arms of Maria, and hear her petition kindness for it as the sole remains of Montague Thornton, and expire.

"Sincere was the tear which Maria shed on the pale cheek of her unsuspect-

ing rival; and sincere, though silent, was the vow by which she engaged to protect the helpless orphan committed to her mercy by both its parents in their last awful hour.

" Children are naturally engaging from their very dependence, and generally attractive from their endearing and artless fondness, their animated gestures and imitative actions, which, in exhibiting their own lively perceptions, kindle ours. But, alas! the offspring of poor Montague was not thus gifted; abstracted from the memory of its parents, this little creature could awaken no feeling, save pity; a pity allied to disgust. It was now two years old, yet could not walk from weakness and contraction in its limbs; a sickly and withered skin hung over its features, and veiled rather than covered them; a sense of pain, which it could not otherwise express, was vented in a wearisome and wrangling cry, which night and day disturbed and distressed

all around it, and rendered even a mo-ther's patience unequal to the tedious and heart-corroding task of rearing it.

"As all the little property the widow might have possessed on embarking, was sunk in the wreck, Mrs. Allanson readily undertook the expenses of the funeral; which being over, she appeared desirous of returning home as speedily as possible, and after arranging her departure, and holding some private conversation with the relation of the deceased, she thus addressed Maria:—

"'My dear girl, you know this sad affair has detained us here a whole month, I have, therefore, ordered every thing about our journey, and settled with the child's relation, every thing about it.'

"'Settled! my dear madam?'

"'Yes, *settled;* I will give her twenty pounds a year to take care of it for the next two years; and, if it lives longer, which nobody can expect, or desire, I will give her more; or you will, which is

much the same. All I mean to say is, that as you did in a manner take to it, I will assist your promise.'

" 'I see all your kindness, madam, but I think resigning my charge is not fulfilling my promise.'

" 'Pray, who is so proper as its own relation, the very person who brought up its mother, to take charge of it?'

" 'She is now grown old, and unequal to the task.'

" 'Well, say what you please, it cannot be worse nursed than it has been; and in short, Maria, without being more inhuman than other people, I must say, that I cannot live any longer in the house with that child.'

" 'Indeed, my dear aunt, I cannot expect that you should; at your time of life, it is impossible for you to submit to such an inconvenience.'

" 'Then pray do you intend to abandon *me*, for this child?'

" 'I will abandon *neither*: during its

present state of weakness, I will remain here, where the cheapness of all the necessaries of life will enable me to provide for us both; but in any case of sickness or sorrow, which shall render my society valuable to you, then, my dear madam, I will fly immediately to you; and you will find, I trust, that absence has only increased my skill in administering to your relief.'

" 'You are to do as you please, Miss Templeman; you are of an age to judge for yourself. — I may, perhaps, be allowed to say, a home with *me*, is rather the more creditable thing of the two — a young lady living at a fishing town in Wales, nursing a sick child that nobody knows, has rather an odd look with it — 'tis not what I should have expected in my niece, Templeman's daughter, the most correct of women — but I talk like an old maid; my notions of a gentlewoman's duties are obsolete.'

" 'If any language could have induced

Maria to have changed her plan, this was precisely that which was most likely to effect it: but though cut to the heart, she resolved to abide by the helpless object of her adoption. With the utmost meekness she yet acted firmly, and after many painful altercations, her relative departed in anger; and the aunt of poor Sophia, after being handsomely reimbursed, took her departure also.

"Maria was now indeed cast on herself for support; she had neither friendship to countenance, nor society to solace her hours. She had devoted herself to ceaseless toil, and wearisome occupation, in a case which scarcely promised reward, and insured blame and misconception; which she more particularly dreaded from her elder brother, to whom she was aware the affair would be represented by Mrs. Allanson, during her season of anger, in the most reprehensible point of view.

"Many a tiresome hour, many a languid day, were sustained by her, during

the following winter; but as the succeeding spring advanced, she had the satisfaction to perceive that her cares were not in vain, for every day seemed to bring some portion of health, life, and even loveliness, to her little charge. Its withered skin was now filled and delicately tinged; its limbs were invigorated; its motions alert; and it spoke articulately; and walked with grace and agility.

"If ever woman was more peculiarly born for the tender offices, the patient skill, the unwearied energies of a mother, that woman was Maria. The understanding and sensibility she possessed, thus exercised, led to forming whatever had hitherto been deficient in her character; retaining her gentleness of manners, she added to it firmness, decision, and fortitude. Looking to the future wants and situation of her young charge, she became careful, vigilant, and capable of business. Her own expenses were well managed, her means prudently husband-

ed; and, although she maintained her usual affectionate correspondence with her brother, she preserved that independent silence on pecuniary concerns, which she had hitherto observed as to all her past misfortunes.

"But as time advanced, and her lisping companion displayed new beauties and new powers, Maria could not help desiring benefits denied to their present secluded situation. One day walking out with the little girl, and deeply meditating on the future, she was interrupted by Sophia's entreaties, that she would look at the grand carriage which was coming towards them, and was like nothing that ever she had seen.

"Maria looked up and beheld an elegant landau, which was indeed uncommon in such a place as that; and, with her usual attention to the wishes of the child, she stood still, until it should have passed.

"The carriage drove slowly — it contained a bulky gentleman, and two ladies

of fashionable appearance, who being little amused by the beautiful country through which they were passing, fixed their eyes on Maria.

" 'Bless my life,' and 'who could have thought it,' was ejaculated by each of the ladies, as bowing with an air of supercilious condescension, they obliged her to recognise the widow of Francis and her sister.

" 'Who is it?' said the gentleman peevishly.

" 'Miss Templeman, Sir George, the colonel's sister, whom we were speaking of last night.'

" 'Stop!' cried Sir George, in a voice of thunder, which his servants instantly obeyed.

" Sir George rose from his seat and made a most respectful bow to Maria — the ladies took their cue from this bow, and were full of joy for this unexpected rencontre, so romantic, so charming, so comical. The surprise of the moment

did not, however, prevent the widow from announcing her sister, 'as Lady Meyers;' adding, 'I suppose you know nothing here of what is going on in the world.'

"Lady Meyers pressed Miss Templeman to enter the carriage, which she declined; and they then regretted the necessity they were in of bidding her adieu; but the Baronet with a volley of oaths declared, 'that no such necessity existed, for that he should stop all night at the village before them.'

"No resistance was made, Sir George was a better commander than the Colonel had been; all was smiling submission on the part of the sisters.

"In consequence of this arrangement, Maria could not, without an absolute breach, from which her timidity and good temper equally shrunk, refuse to join their tea table.—She was received by the Baronet not only with that marked

politeness which was the fashion of his day, but a kind of affectionate respect for which she could not account, till he thus addressed her :

" 'Miss Templeman, I knew your father well, he was as fine a young fellow, and as worthy a man, as I ever remember to have known.'

" Maria bowed silently, but her eye spoke.

" 'Aye, aye — he was a little my senior, but we were fellow-students at Oxford, and at that time of day, though I say it, not much unlike each other in any point; — but he went into the country — I went to town — he married, became a family man and a happy man — I did *not* marry, had no connections, no family, no happiness — and at a time when I might have had a daughter like you, or a grandchild like your pet there, I got taken in like a fool as you see.'

" Both the ladies set up an affected titter.

" 'Aye, aye, laugh away, let them laugh who wins.'

" 'You are so droll, Sir George.'

" 'I am glad you have found it out, Ma'am, 'twas a discovery reserved for a widow; they are said to be deep — devilish deep.'

" Maria felt very uncomfortable, but could scarcely be said to be relieved when Lady Meyers in her anxiety to divert her from Sir George, said to her,

" 'And do you really prefer this secluded situation to your pretty seat of Hallowdale?'

" 'That house, you may recollect, is my brother's: my present home rather suits my circumstances, than pleases my taste.'

" Sir George sat rolling his tongue about in his mouth, as if he were collecting a sufficient quantity of venom for his next attack; his lady, therefore, already fearing it, felt herself impelled to proceed.

" 'Is your brother returning from Canada soon? will you live with him when he does come? I suppose he has a large family now? how many are there?'

"Puzzled with the multiplicity and rapidity of these queries, Maria could not immediately answer; and Mrs. Templeman, without the slightest portion of curiosity on her part, but from the mere dread of a pause, began also to enquire.

" 'I suppose your great aunt is alive yet? pray is'nt it all over with the Thorntons? did'nt you tell me that little girl was some Mrs. Thornton's? I don't remember her at all—don't you think it has a great look of Montague?'

" 'Zounds,' exclaimed Sir George with a great thump on the table, 'have you brought Miss Templeman here to put her to the question? I am a magistrate, and maintain there is no law in the land to authorise torture.'

"The child terrified, clung to Maria; on which the Baronet softening his voice

said, 'Now we have silence in the court, I insist on Miss Templeman's right to making reprisals, by asking as many questions as she pleases.'

"Maria observed, 'that she had no questions to ask, except on a painful subject, on which, perhaps, there was little to learn.'—Her eye showed not less by its direction than its suffusion, that she sought from the widow some information respecting Francis; but no reply being made, Sir George exclaimed,

"'Then I will ask them for you.'—'Pray, Lady Meyers, how came you to angle so well, as to catch that floundering porcupine, Sir George? is'nt he monstrous cross? doesn't he grumble at your extravagance? and think himself terribly hampered with two of you?' Then turning to the widow, 'Pray Mrs. Templeman, does your conscience never remind you of your debts to me? is it not a monstrous shame that you should enjoy a jointure of five hundred pounds a year,

out of my family; nay, even my personal property; while I am starving in Wales, rich only in my integrity, my beauty?'

" 'Sir George, Sir George, how you do run on, you really hurt my sister,' said Lady Meyers.

" '*Your* sister's sensibility, and *her* sister's affection, are mighty pretty things, but they differ as much from the same properties in Maria, as the bloom on her cheek does from the rouge on your's. Oh! I like the sensibility which led an honest youth, the son of a *gentleman*, to deeds, from which his better feelings shrank; I admire the feeling which drove a British officer to the terrible alternative of forfeiting his honour, or ruining the virtuous hopes of his only sister; I revere the maternal tenderness, which could abandon an only child in the moment of its father's absence, and —'

" Mrs. Templeman, in disorder, quitted the room.

" 'Dear Sir George, you have driven my sister away.'

" 'I have no objection to your following her; then, as the proverb says, I should kill two birds with one stone.'

" 'My dear Sir George!'

" 'My *dear* Lady Meyers, there is many a true word spoken in jest.'

" The lady, however, sat still, and even endeavoured to smile and talk; but it soon appeared that Sir George did not shoot his arrows for sport alone, although he had certainly pleasure in wounding: in despite of many looks of entreaty from his lady, he, with a look of determined conduct, addressed Maria thus.

" 'Miss Templeman, when your brother (begging your pardon) played the fool by marrying, as I have done, he settled ten thousand pounds on his wife, which (failing heirs) reverts to you and your heirs: it is necessary you should know this, for between ourselves, the lady's life is not worth two year's pur-

chase (thanks to the present mode of dress); and depend upon it, if possible, some fraud will be practised: let your brother see to this.'

"'Sir George, you do say such strange things.'

"'Aye, and *will* say them, my lady wife, "ne'er shake your curly wig and look at me; you cannot say I did it:" there is no settlement from me.'

"'Wig, Sir George! I defy your words: wig, indeed! I have nothing false about me.'

"'Save, your complexion, your hair, and your heart: ah, there's the rub.'

"The lady burst into tears — the unfeeling can weep over their own sorrows, and the mortifications of pride are very bitter ones. Maria, awkward and distressed, rose to depart, but Sir George, with recovered politeness, and even suavity of manners, entreated her to use his carriage. Glad to witness peace before her departure, Maria observed there was

not any occasion for such an accommodation, as her lodgings were very near; when the Baronet replied, 'but you will do me a favour, Madam, I shall like to see a fine woman in a carriage of mine; this has never been so honoured, for I only bought it upon my marriage.'

"This was worse than all the rest, yet even *this* was endured in silence by the haughty beauty, whose punishment Maria could not witness without pain; and sincerely did she rejoice on finding herself in her own peaceful cottage; and drawing her little protegé closely to her breast, she devoutly thanked her God, for the health, independence, and usefulness she yet possessed; and in humble confidence, left the future to his all-wise disposal."

CHAP. VII.

> trust me, sweet,
> Out of this silence I yet pick a welcome.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

"THE days of Maria's seclusion were now drawing to an end; her elder brother, after a painfully protracted absence of more than ten years, returned to his country, and entered on the abode of his ancestors; where he was received with enthusiasm, and where an amiable wife and rising family, promised to render him happy. He was impatient to see that only remaining branch of his house, which had once gladdened these scenes; and, on his visiting Mrs. Allanson, learnt with sincere grief her present situation, and that train of painful circumstances

which have been recited, and which were now given by the old lady, not in anger, but in sorrow.

" Anxious to restore her to the mansion from which she had been so long exiled, he declared an intention of immediately setting out to Wales, for the purpose of conducting her thither; but before it was possible for him to fulfil this intention, Maria arrived.

" A brother, in whom she looked to receive a parental monitor, as well as a friend, was beheld by Maria with blushes, and welcomed with tears; and even the warmth and tenderness of his reception, affected her spirits, and awoke self-reproach in her bosom: he had been ever kind and considerate towards her; had been a long exile from his own country, in pursuit of a property which was even yet denied to him, and which his increasing family rendered desirable; she felt, therefore, as if she had wronged him of her own powers to assist him, and her

partiality to poor Frank, appeared almost criminal in her eyes; so differently do we estimate our own feelings in different periods of life.

"The arrival of her aunt at this time, was, for a moment, a new source of disquietude, but the kindness she manifested, re-assured her, and she soon became tolerably composed, and able to receive the various youthful candidates for her affection, who now crowded around her.

"'But pray, Maria, which of all these is *your* child?' said the old lady.

"Maria presented her little blushing girl.

"'What! this rosy, curly-haired child! this straight well made girl? it can never be the little wawling crooked brat I saw; yet the eyes are the same, sure enough.'

"'And the hair too, but it was then covered by a cap.'

"'Well, child! you have done wonders, that's certain; and I am truly thankful

that you did not kill yourself in saving the child: but you look quite rosy and plump yourself, and better than you have done these seven years. Well, child! I hope you will enjoy the comforts of a mother; I am sure you have earned them hardly enough, the child is *all* your own.'

"'I am not sure of that,' said Mr. Templeman, 'for by a singular coincidence, Mr. Thornton is now returning from a much longer absence than mine, to reclaim his native acres. The money which he has gained by honest industry, he is now applying to the payment of mortgages;' and, although he is yet a bachelor, and at an age which renders it by no means improbable that he should marry, I think he can hardly fail to claim an interest in such a child as this.'

"This was a new cause of anxious cogitation to Maria, who conscious, of her own inability to provide for the offspring of Montague, yet dreaded any claimant

on the person of one so infinitely dear to her, and who had so long supplied the only object on which her benevolent affections could be exercised. In a short time the subject pressed still closer upon her mind, for Mr. Thornton arrived in the neighbourhood, and the good offices which Mr. Templeman exercised for him in various ways before his arrival, rendered it probable that they would become very intimate.

"Mr. Thornton, aware of this kindness, lost no time in calling upon Mr. Templeman — the children were in the room at the time when this visit took place, and after some general conversation, he observed, 'that they were fine ones, and not noisy, considering.'

"'If you are fond of a quiet child, let me recommend this to you,' said Mr. Templeman, drawing Sophy from the group; 'she is my little mountain daisy, always cheerful, yet never obtrusive.'

" 'A pretty creature indeed, will you come to me, Miss?'

" Being now accustomed to receive the caresses of Mr. Templeman, the little shy child did not hesitate to accept the invitation; she nestled close up to him, and after standing thus a few minutes, he patted her head, and took her upon his knee.

" 'Now my little Sophy,' said Mr. Templeman, 'you are in your proper place.—Long may that arm encircle you; long may you enjoy the protection of your last, your only relative, your uncle.'

" 'Relative! Uncle! what can you mean, Sir? I understood Montague's widow and child were dead: surely the old woman I saw at Paddington told me so: she talked of a charitable lady and a child dying by inches, I am certain, but she was so deaf, and mumbled so, I could make nothing of her though I did my best.'

" 'It is probable that she believed what she said, and as she changed her abode without informing Maria whither she was gone, could not be informed to the contrary: that child's features will inform you better than I can on the subject; except her eyes, they are all Montague's, or, I may say, your own.'

" 'Albeit unused to the melting mood,' tears came freely into Mr. Thornton's eyes; he had ever loved Montague with that kind of affection a man feels rather for his sister than his brother; and this tenderness, Mr. Templeman wished him to transfer to the helpless little female before him: unfortunately the child did not second his intentions; Maria at this moment entering the room, she fled precipitately from the strange gentleman whose emotion she could not comprehend, to wind her 'little strong embrace' round the knees of her dear protectress.

" 'I see, I see,' said Mr. Thornton, 'to whom she is indebted for life: I

understood something of it from old Mrs. Crawley, but she said either it was dead, or deformed, or it would be a good thing.—Ah! well! well! I am obliged to Miss Templeman for her charity to my niece, but you have taken me by surprise; I wish you good morning.'

" Mr. Templeman was sorry to perceive, that his neighbour, who was the very reverse of his late brother in many things, a plain matter-of-fact man, with good dispositions, but little inclined to analyse, or act from their immediate impulses, looked upon himself in the light of a man upon whom a theatric trick had been played; and who had been cajoled into an emotion which, in his own opinion, indicated weakness; and what he called 'exposed him,' before the children.

" It was some time before he called again, but when he did, the children were sent to the nursery, and his quiet being undisturbed, he agreed to take

dinner with Mr. Templeman, *en famille*. Sophy was not at this time pointed out to him, but on bidding good bye to them all, it was observed that he held her little hand a long time, which she patiently permitted, amusing herself with counting his buttons. 'So,' said he, 'you don't run after Mama Templeman to-day, how happens that?'

" 'Oh,' said Maria, forcing a smile, 'she was a stranger when she did that; children at her age soon give their affections to any one who is kind to them, and Sophia has now a house-full of friends to love and to follow.'

" 'Do you really think she could love any body well enough to be happy with them besides you?'

" 'Certainly! I have no doubt of it; for I am going in a few days to spend some time with Mrs. Allanson, which I could not do, if I were not sure that the child would now be happy without me: I would not leave so trouble-

some a guest as a fretful child, to my sister Templeman's care, who has so many of her own.'

" Mr. Thornton fell into a fit of deep musing, at the end of which he abruptly departed.

" 'Maria,' said Mr. Templeman, 'you have been this night a heroine.'

" 'No,' returned she, 'simply a woman who has so far overcome her selfish wishes, as to seek the real benefit of the object she professes to love: on this subject of fond and unceasing solicitude, my mind has been employed many days. I am aware that Mr. Thornton will demand love from his niece, as the reward of his services; and that in her love he may find the solace of his future life: if, using my influence with the child, I draw her affections wholly to myself, I deprive him of this happiness, and her of a friend, and a situation in life, it will never be in my power to supply. In giving her to him, I shall not necessarily

take from her any essential benefit she might derive from my kindness; for when he is secure of her affections, he will naturally look to me for instruction as to her future education: the moment he ceases to be jealous, he will become confiding.'

" 'Your intention is perfectly consistent with good sense and sound principles, and with that tenderness which is worthy an enlightened mother; and at this tender age will be found easily practical with your young charge: but the task you impose on yourself is one of no common difficulty — to work for this child, almost to beg with her, would be less difficult than to give her thus away; to see her affections transferred, her caresses bestowed on another, while the remembrances of all you have done and suffered for her, is still fresh upon your mind, I conceive to be hard indeed.'

" 'So hard,' said Mrs. Templeman, 'that it requires the higher principles of

a Christian, to aid the intention of an amiable woman.'

"Pursuant to the plan she had laid down, Maria began to go, for a few days at a time, to Mrs. Allanson's, and Sophia, after the first time, suffered her to depart without crying. Mr. Thornton then invited all the children to his house; on a second visit Sophia was left all night; soon afterwards, she consented to remain every night, if she might come in the morning to take her lessons with the rest; this arrangement was entered into, and in the pleasure of revealing her infantine acquirements, or communicating her plans, she soon learned to return with pleasure to her uncle, whose delight in her increased every hour; and when he found how much she soon really loved him, he willingly trusted her to the guidance of Maria, in every thing essential to her improvement and future happiness; combating in himself the desire he felt of indulging her to excess. This

happy intercourse was once nearly being interrupted, from Mr. Thornton's making an offer of marriage to Maria, which she refused, and thus occasioned a temporary suspension of intimacy, but which the welfare of the child overcame; another offer of the same nature (but from a man of far superior endowments), was refused by her about two years afterwards; since when, she has remained free from importunities of this nature.

"Engaged perpetually in her brother's family, Maria has evinced that amiable, generous, and discriminating kindness, consistent with her character, and to the child of her love; she has imparted a thousand imperceptible, unostentatious good offices, felt and seen only in their effects; so essential, indeed, have been her cares in this respect, that the young person in question, although brought up by a bachelor and an unmarried woman, is yet agreeable, modest, sensible, and pious; which I hope you will allow to

be, from *me*, no common portion of praise."

Mr. Selwyn ceased speaking; and his young auditors seized the moment of his silence, less to thank him for his tale than to murmur at the conclusion of it; which they affirmed was out of all rule; marriage, or death, being the only regular termination in all cases: to this charge Mr. Selwyn could only reply, "that neither could be used by him in the present case as —"

"But papa," interrupted Letitia, "could that child really forget Maria?"

"Forget her! certainly not: have I not told you that she is tenderly attached both to her and Mrs. Templeman?"

"But she ought surely to have a very decided preference, a most devoted gratitude, towards a woman, who, in the very prime of her days, gave herself up to nursing a poor, sick, disagreeable infant, whom no other person could struggle with, or endure."

"But the *particular* acts of kindness to which you refer, have been carefully concealed from the girl in question; they have never met her ear till *now*."

"*Now!*" exclaimed the young ones, gazing at him and at each other; "dear Sir, what can you possibly mean?" "Never met her ear till *now!*"

Rose de Grey started, the 'pure and eloquent blood,' rushed to her cheek, and as quickly receded; she cast a glance at her young friends on either side: they had all parents now living. "*I*," said Rosa, timidly, "I am the only orphan"—the remembrance of Mr. Selwyn's praise suffused her cheek and checked her words; some early recollections, some faint traces of infant sorrow, on first visiting her uncle, flushed on her mind: she rose; she sat down again; then starting, flung herself on Mr. Selwyn's bosom, exclaiming,

"Oh Sir, it is surely me you mean! there is no other poor orphan that could

have been thus nursed by charity and pity, but myself: Oh, tell me is it not Miss Selwyn, dear good Miss Selwyn, that has done all this for me?'

Pressing the sobbing girl in his arms, Mr. Selwyn replied, "Yes, my love, you are indeed the Sophia of whom I spoke; and in the history of my sister, I have given you that of your unfortunate, but worthy parents."

"How strange! but all the while you spoke, Sir, that Montague was so very, *very* dear to me: and was he then my father?"

Rosa could say no more; her tender heart naturally paid the tribute of sensibility to the memory of her unhappy parent; while Letitia enquired of her mother,

"But was my aunt really so handsome as Maria?"

"When I first saw my sister she was very handsome, though the bloom of youth was past, and many sorrows had

undoubtedly left their traces on her countenance; but to her cares for *you*, her long watchings over *me*, you must impute the change in her person, which is yet certainly very agreeable: so excellent, so exalted, is my idea of the character of your aunt, that, although Mr. Selwyn has sometimes felt it a duty to point out little errors in her conception of her duties, and the exercise of her feelings, I must own I can attach no possible blame to her conduct."

"Dear Mrs. Selwyn," said Rosa, recovering her spirits, "I am certain that you must be right."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of its unconscious subject, who accustomed as she ever was to be received with the welcome of warm greetings, was yet somewhat surprised at the abundant joy her presence appeared to inspire, especially at its expression from Rose de Grey, who after clasping her arms around her, sunk silently on

her knees, and embraced those of her early benefactress.

"My dear child," said Miss Selwyn, tenderly raising her, "I feel the kind intention of this abundant fondness; you have learnt that the poor old lady is dead, and at your age, death appears so terrible a thing, that you conclude that I am in a state of great affliction; but this is *not* the case, my dear; for the removal of my poor aunt was, from her great sufferings and age, rendered very desirable."

"You are mistaken, sister," said Mr. Selwyn, "for though we expected hearing every hour of this awful event, the actual announcement was brought by you."

"She departed in my arms last night."

A silence of some minutes succeeded: no person could be actually grieved, for the deceased had fallen full of years, and prepared for her change; but all

were awe-struck, for death is a solemn subject of contemplation: the young people, from time to time, cast anxious glances towards their aged grandfather, which he answered by looks of love and heavenly confidence; the expression of his upraised eye assured them, that on this subject, "he communed with his heart and was at rest."

"I apprehend, Letitia," said Mr. Selwyn, "that our great aunt has left you her executrix?"

"No: considering me as little calculated for a woman of business, she has confided all the trouble, and half of her personalty to you."

"But she has surely left you her estate?"

"She has, brother, together with all the rest of her property."

"It is what all her friends expected, and what your long and wearisome attentions to her comfort well merited."

A murmur of pleasure ran round

the room; and looks of gratulation lit up every face; this seemed a denouement to the history, that gave universal satisfaction.

Miss Selwyn was still timid, almost to bashfulness; she was evidently desirous of saying something she could not easily reveal; and, as it was probably necessary, that matters of business should be talked over, the Denbigh family silently withdrew, followed by the daughters of Mr. Selwyn, and his young sons; but Henry remained, concluding that his professional knowledge might be called for, in case the papers in his aunt Letty's hand, were codicils.

Rose de Grey, absorbed in the surprising, and to her affecting, details relative to her parents, and feeling her heart irresistibly drawn towards the gentle and benignant being, around whom she hung, did not perceive the flight of the rest, until the door was closed; when awkward and irresolute, she appeared rather to

await dismissal, than seek removal; but, as Miss Selwyn leaned upon her arm, and appeared evidently agitated, it became necessary for her to remain.

"Henry," said Miss Selwyn, holding out the papers,

"What are these, my dear Madam?"

"They are the title deeds of the Grange Estate, it is not a large one you know, but it is an independence: these were given to me some days since, or I should not have taken them so early; but this is your birth-day, Henry, and I wish to make you a present worthy your acceptance; the first, alas! I ever made you."

Henry gazed on his aunt, in silent astonishment; but Mr. Selwyn, stepping forward, took the parchment from his hand.

"Letitia, I cannot permit this; indeed, I cannot."

"Then you will make me wretched: ever since your return, ever since I be-

held your son, and especially since my love grew with the boy's growth, and strengthened with his strength, I have earnestly wished for the means of rendering him what I call justice; to deprive me of this pleasure, is an act of cruelty unworthy of you; but my sister will surely unite with me, in beseeching you to permit his acceptance of my gift."

Mr. Selwyn looked at his son, then at Rose de Grey, then upon his sister, and shook his head.

"Come, come, my dear," said Mrs. Selwyn, "I see we must all yield to my sister."

"And make her a beggar again?" returned he.

"No, that you cannot; remember, I share half the personalty with you, and I am but too likely to have the whole of poor Frank's ill-placed jointure; for I learn that his widow has nearly finished her sad career of folly and dissipation."

"Well, Henry, I believe I must

yield to all these 'pleaded reasons;' I confess I have not done it graciously, but your grateful eye, my dear boy, glistens with a happier expression — here, take the papers; I heartily wish *you* joy of your estate; and you may wish *me* joy of the sister who has made it your's.'

Mrs. Selwyn and her sister-in-law were instantly locked in each other's arms; and for a moment, Rose felt herself deserted. She endeavoured to wish Henry joy, but her heart beat so tumultuously, that the words died upon her lips; her confusion increased every moment, and to hide it, she flew to old Mr. Harland, and leaning against the arm of his chair, she burst into tears.

"My pretty Rose, what is the matter with you? I fear you are ill, or you would not cry just in the very moment of Henry's good luck: why, my dear, he might have written, and pored over those great law books of his, for ten years to come, before he could have been

able to take a wife, and live in the world like a gentleman ; now you see, my dear, he can make a settlement, and look up to the first fortune in the neighbourhood ; these being things fathers and uncles require."

This was very plain matter-of-fact cause of rejoicing ; yet in how long a time, and in how many round-about ways, would it have taken the young lawyer to say the same thing to Rose ; and to have explained to her, why his aching heart, divided between duty and inclination, had so often been apparently cold, when it was warm with as true and tender a flame, as could animate a youthful lover.

" Our dear Rose," said Mr. Selwyn, on perceiving her situation, " has been too much agitated this evening with my story : Henry, conduct her into the library, she will recover her composure when she is alone ; and send in the rest of our young party, that they may be made happy with the knowledge of your

good fortune: beyond our own fireside, this must not be mentioned; yet the first donor of this inheritance claims from us all possible respect."

Tears of delight bedewed the eyes of the affectionate sisters, when they heard of Henry's acquisition; and with gratitude, they embraced their beloved aunt, whom the Denbighs now fancied quite as good and handsome, as the Maria of the story; and while young Denbigh observed, "it was indeed a pleasant thing for a man to be independent early in life, and how very grateful he felt to his own kind father, for his intentions towards *him*," he was observed to cast a look full of meaning, to Mary Selwyn, which did not meet with a reproving glance from any person present.

"Well, after all," said the young Letitia, "my dear papa's story has had quite a regular conclusion — a death, a fortune given to the heroine, and, perhaps, there may be a wedding: not indeed of any

person present, so you need not blush so much, sister."

"On this subject, my little rattle, we must speak softly; precipitation is always wrong, but never so much so as in matrimonial cases. I am like the Vicar of Wakefield, desirous of prolonging the days of courtship."

"Fie! cousin," said Mrs. Denbigh, "how dare you say so with your wife at your elbow?"

"I have the greater right; for she has kept me her lover these five-and-twenty years."

Miss Selwyn now stealing out of the room to join the young couple (who even in this moment of delightful reconciliation and confidence, yet could not feel *her* presence intrusive), Mary, associating and contrasting the nature of her mother's happiness with that of her aunt, observed,

"My father has given us a very interesting story, and we are much obliged

to him, but yet one cannot help regretting that its principal subject was an old maid."

"I am sorry," said Mr. Selwyn, "that this impression is left on your mind, my dear; for I had hoped, Mary, that you would have seen clearly, that your aunt is at this time, and has now been for many years, a much happier woman than in all probability, she would have been, as the wife of the only man she ever desired to marry. With many virtues, and fine talents, Montague Thornton was evidently deficient in that firmness of character, necessary for the husband and father of a family: it is true, had he married Maria early in life, and before her fortune was impaired, we can scarcely conceive a promise of more happiness than such a couple were calculated to enjoy; but yet against this, Maria's overweening love for Frank, would have militated; she could not then have saved him from ruin, which it was certainly

her comfort to have done, though at so great a sacrifice — to love, and be beloved, to tread every day, the same path of useful exertion, elegant employment, and conscious utility, has long constituted the happiness of my sister, and will do so, I trust, to the end of her existence; habit and education, it is true, give to your sex, a want of some on whom to lean, to look up to; not so much for assistance, as comfort and protection: this your aunt finds, and has long found in a brother; and when, in the course of nature, he sinks, surely she will find it in his son, or his son's son? So long as there is one spark of virtue and gratitude left in this large family, so long there will be some child, who will honour the age, and revere the form of their maiden aunt."

Tears swam in Mr. Selwyn's eyes, for he was a man of quick feelings by nature, but they were habitually under controul; his sensibility waited on his virtue, for he had seen so much misery arise from

the indulgence of such emotions, that he never gave way to them ; rallying, therefore, he said gaily, "Well! ladies, who begins the next story?"

"The next is to be my task," said Mrs. Denbigh, "but I beg leave to forewarn my young hearers, in order to preserve their minds from running after discoveries, instead of attending to my story, that I shall not follow your example in offering any piece of family history to their attention—the lady of whom I shall speak, is utterly unknown to any person present."

"But, dear ma'am, pray give your story a name."

"Well, I will call it 'Constancy,' Letitia, or 'Domestic Trials.'"

"Constancy is a very great virtue; I know nothing more admirable than constancy," said Letitia.

"A very laudable liking at fifteen, and a very respectable virtue at five-and-twenty," observed her father; "but, my

dear, even constancy has its bounds — consistent attachment is one thing, romantic perseverance another; good principles, good dispositions, and good sense, should be every one's guide, in cases of this kind, as, I doubt not, your aunt's story will exemplify, allowing for that mixture of weakness which is, more or less, observable in the best characters."

As soon as the family were enabled to return to their general habits of quiet intercourse, Mrs. Denbigh pursued her intention in the following manner.

CONSTANCY;

OR,

DOMESTIC TRIALS.

CHAP. I.

She is young, wise, fair,
In these to nature she's immediate heir.
SHAKSPEARE.

"TAKE care of your heart to night, my dear Hanway," said Major Maynard to his favourite lieutenant, soon after his arrival at the town of B—— "for this very night, I hear that the beautiful Mrs. Hemmings introduces her more beautiful daughter at the assembly."

"And pray who is Mrs. Hemmings?"

"Every body in *this* town or neighbour-

hood, would answer 'not to know her argues yourself unknown.'"

"Probably, yet I apprehend the fault is very excusable in a young fellow who is entirely ignorant of the censurers, their town, their beauties, and, in fact, every thing connected with them; but to the question, Major."

"Mrs. Hemmings is the wife of a very worthy man who is a merchant in a very extensive business, she has beauty, spirit, taste, and hospitality, to fit her for the partner of a prince; her house and table are generally open to military men, which is very seldom the case in these manufacturing towns, and I can assure such *agreements* are not to be slighted in country quarters. When I was here between two and three years ago, I was indebted to her for charming away many a dull hour, and, in fact, treating me with society I have not often found equalled in much higher circles."

"This may be the case, Major, for I

am told every day, that beauty is delightful, even when coupled with insipidity and caprice; but I must own myself sceptical in its power, when united even remotely, with vulgarity; and the wife or daughter of a man in business, especially in a country town, will, I think, be little likely to fascinate me: do not mistake me, I neither suppose the ladies in question are either uneducated or illiterate; but in *such* people, however accomplished they may deem themselves, there is always a degree of purse-proud display which proves the *increase* of their circumstances, the *acquired* power of exhibition which disgusts me. The way too in which they dress up their daughters and display their superiority to their grandmothers, thereby destroying alike the dignity and the modesty of their sex, is shocking. In short, there is a-a-a *je ne sais quoi*, about these country fashion-leaders I cannot bear."

"Very true, you *do not know what*

indeed; but allow me to tell you, that the girl of whom I was speaking, in addition to that beauty which is occasionally found in all families, whether traceable for half a century, or half a dozen, possesses what no title, genealogy, connection, society, or even education can bestow, that *gem* which in a palace outshines every other lustre, and even in a cottage would illuminate it with pleasure and importance."

"I presume she is a wit?"

"Not that exactly, though her mind possesses that power, fancy, and sensibility, which are the true properties of wit; she is perhaps a genius, at any rate a girl of talent, for were the powers she possesses concentrated in any one point, I am persuaded they would prove the superiority usually attached to these phrases; but they are in my opinion much better employed, in giving a general charm to the circle of family connections by which she is surrounded."

Mr. Hanway did not reply, for he saw that the Major was warm in his admiration; and having started objections he did not choose to yield: he pursued these ideas silently, until he had persuaded himself that even the praise thus lavished appertained to a kind of girl, he should think more than commonly obtrusive, conceited, and unbearable.

Enough of this passed in his countenance to determine the Major to refuse, or rather withhold the introduction he had meditated — they parted, and did not meet again till the festive occasion alluded to called them to the assembly room.

Hanway felt a little curiosity hang about his mind as he entered the room, which induced him narrowly to examine every one who resembled the form he had conjured up in his mind's eye as her representative, that is, every girl with a fair complexion, ruddy cheek, and who

was dressed in the extreme of the fashion. Whilst thus employed, he unluckily set his foot upon a lady's train by which she was suddenly checked in her steps and was nearly falling. Hanway adroitly saved her from the accident, and thus atoned for his fault, for which he apologized in a manner so elegant, as to draw the sweetest smile from the sweetest countenance he thought he had ever beheld.

Unwilling to lose the chance of further acquaintance with one whom he was convinced was superior to any of the many around him, and who, though not a girl, was young enough to be a desirable partner, he instantly applied to the steward for an introduction which would enable him to solicit her hand. The lady declined dancing during the early part of the evening, but added "that she had no objection to offering him a proxy in her daughter."

Hanway was really surprised, but before he had time to recover, the daughter,

leaning on her father, was introduced. She appeared scarcely ten years younger than her mother, and would be generally considered less beautiful, for her form, though fine, was unfinished, and her features, as well as her figure, were of that cast which ask for maturity to finish their beauty, although their expression is already perfect. There was, with much softness, a nobleness and simplicity in her countenance, and a penetration in her eye, which denoted imagination and intellect; and before her name was announced, Hanway felt that this must be the girl described by Maynard.

This eventful evening proved that the Major had understood but too well the nature of Hanway's taste, for his heart was by no means proof against the attractions of Henrietta. There was an undefinable charm in her conversation, which arose from her imagination and feeling, and was peculiarly calculated to impress the mind of a very young man,

who having been educated by a widowed mother, she had, in a certain degree, prepared him to become an ardent lover from her own fervent attachment to his father.

Lady Isabella Hanway was the daughter of a viscount, a circumstance she would not have forgotten, if Major Hanway, a soldier of family, but no fortune, had not persuaded her to listen to a sweeter lesson. She did not marry till after her father's death, and her fortune, which was small for her rank, was settled entirely on herself. The Major was a man of great promise, and rose in his profession; but he became its victim soon after the birth of their third child. Of these, two were daughters, the eldest, of whom we are speaking, was called Edward.

Lady Isabella had been a most attached wife, and though in the very prime of life, she immediately retired from the world; and with equal prudence and ma-

ternal affection, devoted herself to her remaining duties; but in proportion as her fortune was curtailed, she thought it necessary to inculcate in the minds of her children, her own rank and their family claims; blending it at the same time with her own devoted attachment to the memory of their father and the respect due to his virtues. Hence when her son in his twentieth year entered the army, his mind was deeply embued with the prejudices of rank, with that species of pride, which carries in it much of the good, as well as evil of our nature, and which therefore the discerning check with caution, considering it as very frequently the gem of honourable conduct, and also of use to a young man who is dependant on his connexions for holding that place in society, to which his birth, attainments, and merit, entitle him.

Whatever might be Hanway's foibles few were inclined to canvas them, to forget that he had claims to thei

indulgence, because he had been the indulged son of an idolizing mother and two admiring sisters. There was about him all that generally attaches his own sex, and fascinates the other; he was brave, high-spirited, ingenuous, gallant, and liberal — polite, insinuating, elegant and full of ardent sensibility. To this it may be added, that few men so young possessed so much information, and still fewer the power of imparting it with so much effect; for his eloquence and graceful utterance rendered every thing he said powerful. The talent he thus possessed was that which he most highly esteemed in others, and he had ever frequented that society in which he most enjoyed its magnetic powers. In doing this he increased his own brilliance, but forfeited many solid advantages; for there may be much to learn, much to love and esteem, where there is little to captivate, and youthful minds, like the

cameleon, take the colour of the characters with whom they associate.

On finding this young gentleman was a friend of Major Maynard's, Mrs. Hemmings gave him a cordial invitation to her house, and on the following day Henrietta might be said to complete her conquest; for as she appeared to him to be surrounded by lovers, he took the alarm, and his sense of jealousy first showed him the situation of his own heart — he became alarmed — he was sensible that a serious engagement would be madness in his situation, even if Henrietta should listen to him and though his vanity was not dormant, he yet had no right to conclude that she could follow her own wishes, since he concluded that many of her suitors were wealthy, and wealth was ever the merchant's Deity. He perceived too, that she was brought up to the enjoyment of uncontrolled pleasure; all her habits were those of expense, yet as one of a large and still

increasing family, it was not to be expected that her fortune on her marriage could be any thing considerable; she was precisely the woman against which his mother had cautioned him, as one who could neither assist him by her connections nor support him by her dowry, but would entail upon him an equal expenditure, with one who might do both.

For a whole day and night, Hanway determined to abstain from the dangerous delight of visiting at Mr. Hemmings's, and subjecting himself to the charming agonies of love, but as soon as he felt his mind a little more composed on the subject, he concluded there would be no harm to call, as he had already conquered an inclination which his reason condemned.

On this evening he beheld Henrietta in her own family circle, where every thing which renders love a principle of profound tenderness, is always felt with increased energy. Men adore, admire, extol, the beauty and grace of her whose

charms attract all eyes, and captivate all hearts; but they *love* her who moves in their own sphere, who speaks and smiles for them, and to them alone. Henrietta playing with her little brothers, and expending her talents on the restoration of a demolished scaramouch; all her lively sallies on the single visitant were more dangerous, because more endearing, than Henrietta exhibiting the graces of the dance, or displaying her bending form and taper fingers at the harp.

Mrs. Hemmings was descended from a respectable family, but she was an orphan, entirely devoid of fortune, and unblest by any friends who could support her, at the time when, notwithstanding her extreme youth, and the advice of his friends, Mr. Hemmings (then a man about thirty), made her an offer of his hand. She was one of those women who, conscious that they possess some virtues of an obvious quality, compromise with themselves for their deficiency in

others: extremely beautiful, polished in her manners, and not marrying her husband from motives of passion,—every where admired and followed, she was yet a constant, grateful, and tender wife. In the consciousness of being such, she did not see the necessity of denying herself those gratifications which come under the proverbial phrase, of 'seeing and being seen:' she dressed splendidly, omitted no opportunity of enjoying public amusements; kept a great deal of company, whom she entertained sumptuously; and usually spent her summers at some fashionable watering-place; nor did she deny herself those enjoyments, on being told, that she was too young and handsome to have a train of officers always after her; or when it was said, that the mother of half a dozen children should consider for the future: even when her generous, confiding husband, with a sigh, observed, "that it was the fault of his nature to

trust too far; that his commercial losses of late, had been terrible, and that really something must be given up," her system of pleasure continued the same.

Indeed on these occasions, Mrs. Hemmings seemed to conceive it her duty to drive 'dull care' as effectually from the mind of her husband, as she had succeeded in banishing its approach from her own. "'Twas of no use to think," she said, "for that could do no good, but might do harm, by injuring the health and the spirits;" and, as Mr. Hemmings believed that her gaiety arose not from deficiency of feeling, and that her desire of enlivening him, sprung from her affection; he generally consented to her plan, and suffered himself to be soothed into peace, or awakened to enjoyment. He took the advice of a wife whom he still doated on, with the fervour of his earliest admiration, and left his cares in his counting-house; or when, perforce, they

entered his parlour, they became rather confided to his daughter, than obtruded on his wife.

This confidence gave to the character of Henrietta, a degree of consequence, of thoughtful tenderness, and of firmness, which might otherwise have been wanting to it; for a being, dandled in the lap of pleasure, and soothed by the lullaby of flattery, could hardly have failed to become selfish, vain, indolent, and unfeeling, if she had not been thus taught to reflect, weigh, and consider. In entering into her father's fears, she was led to imbibe his principles; to consider the demands of justice, the value of integrity, and, unhappily, to learn that confidence was indeed the error of his naturally noble and upright mind; which had not, in an extensive commerce with mankind, learnt to refuse even the most unlimited trust, in those whom he loved and esteemed.

The results of these conversations

were to Henrietta increased attachment to her father, an anxiety to withdraw from the bustle of pleasure to the higher enjoyment of congenial pursuit, in the confidence of friendship, or the sympathy of love. She had hitherto been continually engaged either in the attainments required by modern education, or the dissipation which succeeded it; and it seemed to be her mother's policy to hold her in this frame of mind, until she had herself found some connection which she considered eligible, when she would permit the sensibility of her daughter to flow into its proper channel.

This was the situation of the family when Hanway became acquainted with them; his person, manners, and family, rendered him precisely the beau Mrs. Hemmings wished to attend her daughter; but his want of fortune, and the certainty that his mother would oppose his marriage with Henrietta, rendered her aware, that it was not a desirable

event. The extreme youth of the parties would alone have been an obstacle in the opinion of a prudent mother; but Mrs. Hemmings had married on the day she was sixteen, and as her daughter was within a few months of that period, she already was busy in contriving for her and conjecturing about her.

Mr. Hemmings had something else to think of; but there was another person in the house whose mind was deeply solicitous respecting the future welfare of Henrietta; this was a brother of Mrs. Hemmings, several years younger than her, and who from that circumstance was not perhaps always considered with the reverence to which the name of uncle might entitle him; but whose good humour, warm affection, and steady conduct, rendered him a person of much importance in the family, every branch of which, hung closely to his heart; his hopes, fears, and observations, were confided only to a young man of superior

education and connections, who had been placed during the last two years of his minority in the counting-house of Mr. Hemmings, by his only relation, his maternal uncle.

This person (Mr. Hilton) frequently lamented to his young friend, that preference which his sister showed for military men; and prophesied, that one day or other, her daughter would be forming a connection with one, which could not fail to become unfortunate to a girl of her description "The acuteness of her feelings" he would say; "will destroy her happiness, even with a good husband, so situated; should she marry a man of fortune in this profession, she will be despised by his friends, as the daughter of a country merchant; if one who has no other means of life, she must be wretched from many privations; how much better would it be for my sister to cultivate acquaintance with people in her own line of life, or at least seek for per-

manent connections among those which she has happily experienced to be the best; she is a good creature, but I must own loves show and flattery sadly too much, and her husband never controls her.

With suspicions thus awakened towards every officer, Mr. Hilton seldom omitted every opportunity of watching both Henrietta and Hanway, and more than once he was the means of preventing the impassioned lover from that declaration which was ever hovering on his lips, and had escaped his eyes a thousand times. There is however little doubt but his vigilance would have been eluded, if a sudden order had not arrived, which compelled the officers of this regiment to depart at so short a notice, as to render it impossible for Hanway to see Henrietta again, an impossibility, in which it is probable Major Maynard had a hand, for, as being the monitor to which Lady Isabella had confided her son, he was at

this time probably as anxious to conclude the acquaintance, as he had once been forward to promote it, for after-thought told him, that such an attachment was litttle likely, in the present period of warfare, to increase the happiness of either party.

When Henrietta learnt, that the regiment was gone, she felt assured that the hurry of departure, had alone prevented Hanway from declaring his passion, and, from day to day, she expected to hear from him, but, when a week or two had passed, and no letter was received, either by herself or her father, hope sickened, her colour fled, her appetite forsook her, the world just entered upon appeared already a blank; she dressed, danced, and played, but it was mechanically, and when alone, she wept bitterly, and reproached herself for weeping at all.

One day her father surprised her in tears, "my dear child," said he, "I perceive that somebody has informed you of the cruel reports which are afloat

respecting the stability of my house, and, they have, I doubt not, gone beyond the truth; do not allow them to distress you so much, it is probable, that I shall shortly be enabled to stand as firm as ever."

Henrietta immediately begged to know, "how long these reports had been circulated?"

"Ever since the failure of J——'s bank, it was well known, that I must be inevitably a great loser by them, because I supported them to the last, with my utmost strength, in the full hope of their solvency, things have turned out very differently, but yet" * * *

It instantly flushed on Henrietta's mind, that these evil tidings had transpired the very day before Hanway left B——, and she could not help attributing his silence to that circumstance; her spirit rose indignant, and though love was not positively conquered, yet, contempt for the present trampled him be-

neath her feet. Henrietta had never been taught the value, nor the necessity of money, and, for a young man to consider it, was high treason against all rule; yet, a little reflection led her to see how much sorrow, as in her father's case, might be experienced for the loss, or the want of it.

Her mother had appeared to take no notice of her late dejection, but she evinced great satisfaction in seeing her restored to herself, and pressed her more than ever, to dress and go out; a mode of conduct against which a certain sense of propriety in Henrietta's mind strongly objected, not so much on account of her late disappointment, as for the sake of her father, whose dejection increased daily, and, who appeared to hear of every party either at home or abroad, with the sensations of a malefactor who is condemned to die by torture; every gay engagement inflicted a separate pang,

which he struggled to endure, but could not possibly conceal.

The observations Henrietta now made upon her father, tended to soften the fault of her lover, whose friends she thought, might, in consequence of strong representations, have forced him to forego his own wishes; this tended to sink her spirits and render her more alive to the real causes of alarm which existed. She could not imagine how her mother could still preserve the appearance of ease, and take her usual circuit of amusements; and, sometimes she thought that Mrs. Hemmings was counterfeiting the felicity she could not feel, and, endeavouring to procure for her some wealthy marriage, as a screen from that poverty she could not bear to fall upon a daughter so tenderly and expensively brought up. From this conduct, kind as it might be intended, her delicacy and honour equally revolted with that lingering af-

fection, which still influenced all her expectations for the future.

Whenever Henrietta could, with any propriety, intimate her opinions and wishes on this subject to her mother, she did not fail to do it; but her observations were never well received. Long indulgence had rendered Mrs. Hemmings insensible to the reasoning, and obtuse to the feelings of others. "Could she, who had never been thwarted by a husband, yield to a child?" and although she considered her daughter arrived at an age, when she could properly enter into the most awful of all engagements, and undertake the most sacred of all duties, she yet chose to consider her as a mere girl, utterly unable to form any just conclusion upon these very points. In fact, Mrs. Hemmings, 'the sweetest of all creatures,' would not only suffer no contradiction, but listen neither to the will, nor the wishes, of any one that in the slightest degree opposed her own.

As it was now become the usual time for Mrs. Hemmings to set out for Weymouth, she prepared for her journey, observing, according to her usual mode of reasoning, "that if she did not go, it would not look well. Ill-natured people would be ready to say, that their losses had ruined them; in fact, it would bring all Mr. Hemmings's creditors upon him at once; besides," she added in a half whisper, "who knows what may happen to Henrietta? 'tis her first appearance in public, as one may say."

Henrietta when dressed up for the rooms at Weymouth, considered herself in the light of a victim ornamented for sacrifice, and fancied that her mother's intention might be read in legible characters upon her own blushing cheek. This sensation probably led her to receive the attentions of Sir Charles Elkington, with an aversion they were not calculated to inspire; for Sir Charles was a well-looking man, under thirty, and

many young ladies thought him as agreeable as his rank and fortune were desirable.

The joy of Mrs. Hemmings in this conquest was unbounded, and expressed with an indelicate exultation by no means consistent with her usual manners. The publicity she gave to his attentions, induced inquiries to be made by his acquaintance, as to the pretensions of Mrs. Hemmings; which ended, in his receiving an assurance, that the mother was little better than a fortune-hunter, who having made a successful venture in her own case, was now endeavouring to secure a home for her daughter, which might eventually be the sole refuge of her family.

Sir Charles was not so much in love as to be the dupe either of his own passion, or an artful woman; but the vexation, and, in fact, disappointment he experienced, for he had not calculated on refusal, led him to adopt the most mor-

tifying and tacitly-insulting conduct towards Mrs. Hemmings which circumstances enabled him to adopt. It was the first time she had ever experienced slights of any kind, and she felt them acutely; while Henrietta, though grieved to see her mother vexed, yet could not help rejoicing that she was freed from addresses which she had no reason for denying, and no desire of receiving.

A short time served to convince Sir Charles that the zeal of his friends had gone much too far; he found that Mrs. Hemmings had been a regular visitor for some years; that she moved in a most respectable sphere of life, and was visited by people of the first consideration; and his own recollections of the unaffectedly retiring manners of her daughter, confirmed every favourable idea; and he began not only to repent of his petulance, but determine to atone for it, by offering unequivocally his hand and fortune to Henrietta, when he learned that from

an unexpected summons from home, both the ladies were on their road to B—— at the very time he was thus reviewing his conduct, and returning to his first intentions.

Mrs. Hemmings was thus suddenly recalled to the home which she ought not to have quitted, from the attack of the scarlet fever in her young family; and the heat of the weather had so far assisted the virulence of the disease, that three of her children, and one of their most necessary attendants, were now in the most dangerous situation.

Health, like prosperity, had been hitherto the constant inmate of this family; and the present visitation fell on Mrs. Hemmings with a severity of affliction that almost overwhelmed her faculties. She was a fond mother, but by no means either a patient or skilful nurse, even in common cases; and she did not find the many friends who were wont to attend her in times of indisposition, now

step forward to offer assistance. She felt that there was a two-fold infection in her house, but she had neither time nor power for analysis of either. After some days of intolerable anxiety, her two youngest children became victims to the disease, within a few hours of each other; and a fine boy, some years older, was left in a state which threatened protracted suffering and eventual death.

Terrified, astonished, stupified, by her sorrows and her fears, Mrs. Hemmings became at this time as much the victim of anguish and despair, as she had formerly been the votary of hope and joy; and on Henrietta, young and inexperienced as she was, devolved every important care, every painful duty; and the lively and elegant girl, who hitherto, like the painted butterfly, had sailed on silken wing through the regions of pleasure, was condemned at once to drink of the dregs of sorrow, in the united horrors of disease, mis-

fortune, and death, in those whom she had ever fondly loved, and in whom she might now be truly said to live.

Mr. Hemmings was doatingly fond of his children, yet the death of his lovely little boys (severe as he felt the two-fold stroke to be,) did not really crush him so much, as the settled melancholy, the total self-abandonment of his wife, since he could not help fearing that any addition to her affliction, could hardly fail to affect her senses or her life, and such addition might be daily expected at that time, by every merchant whose property, like his, was exposed to the changes produced by a state of almost universal warfare.

Alas! while he was trembling for his wife, suppressed uneasiness and neglected disease were making rapid inroads on his own constitution; while he sought to recall the rose of health to her cheek, it had fled his own for ever.

Absorbed in her own sorrow, disgust-

ed with the dullness of her habitation, Mrs. Hemmings perceived not the weakness and languor of the husband, (who never approached her but for purposes of condolence,) until her daughter so strenuously insisted upon them, that she was compelled to perceive the fact. She now awoke as from a frightful dream, to a more terrible reality, and with all the trepidation of alarm began to intreat and insist, on using every means necessary for his restoration. The sea-breeze was prescribed, but Mr. Hemmings positively refused to leave home, conceiving his presence particularly necessary there; and the weaker he found himself, the more anxious he became, so to regulate his affairs that in case of the worst he might secure from the wreck of his property, some means of provision to his wife and family. Like many other commercial men, he had experienced numerous losses, which were the actual

cause of his present sufferings, but as the expenditure of his house had really exceeded the bounds of prudence, and his lady had never, like others, stooped to the retrenchments which wisdom advised, the general cry was against her extravagance, to which his present embarrassments were unjustly charged. The pang therefore which wounded him the most, and which he carefully concealed from her, was enduring, from time to time, insinuations against that integrity which he had never forfeited, but which he found it impossible to defend, since he would not shield himself behind a wife whose very faults had arisen from the excess of his admiration and unbounded indulgence.

In the decline of the year, Mr. Hemmings was positively ordered to Bristol as his only resource, and the united entreaties of his wife and daughter at this time prevailed upon him to go thither. He bade a heart-rending adieu to his

felt for the sorrows of her which remained, the truest sympathy.

The state of hopeless dejection which pervaded the mind of Mrs. Hemmings, prevented Mr. Hilton from holding any communication with her on subjects of so much importance to them all; but to Henrietta, he revealed his hopes, fears, and wishes, for the future; happy to find, that notwithstanding the acuteness of her feelings, and the vividness of her imagination, which naturally enlarged her sense of suffering, and pointed the arrows of misfortune, she yet possessed a powerful mind, and an intrepidity of endurance, capable of acting with firmness and magnanimity. He informed her that he thought he should be able to retain such a portion of her late father's business in his hands, as would enable him to maintain them all in some humble way: for his sister and herself, he should immediately seek a cheap situation in the country, where, perhaps, their

cares might restore poor Henry; Alfred must share his labours in business; and William (if possible) be maintained at school.

Henrietta received his promises, and heard of his provisions, with the most lively emotions of gratitude. Her day dreams of happiness for herself, seemed fled for ever; and that buoyant spirit which, in youth, supplies energy for the pursuit of real, or fancied good, was, in her, particularly exuberant; and she required the active exercise of her benevolent affections, to soothe the sorrows of memory, and restore the sense of peace and hope. She was willing to remove to any cottage, however humble; to undertake any office, however menial, for a mother, whose indulgence in the day of prosperity, and whose helplessness in that of adversity, seemed equally to claim her cares; she was also the more tied to this duty, by the reliance she well knew her dying father placed on her: she held

his wishes sacred, as his memory was dear.

But, alas! even the humblest plan could not be prosecuted without money; and, although some trifling payments dropt in from those distant connections, where the main property of Mr. Hemmings was swallowed up, they were yet inadequate to forming the little capital required by Mr. Hilton; and though he struggled to hold the connection which was his only basis, yet he never visited the family for a long time, without imparting new dejection, by an account of failures, in some quarter, where he had hoped for assistance; or vexatious details of advantages lost, for want of the means to secure them. At length, he appeared with looks of joy, and informed them, that he had not only received relief, but such an addition to his capital, as he trusted would enable him to secure the means of life, in the way he had pro-

posed: "Frederic Campseille," said he, "has lent me a thousand pounds."

"Who is Frederic Campseille?" said Henry Hemmings.

"A young man who was in your father's counting-house for the last two years, he is an orphan, and may be termed dependent on his uncle, as he had only two thousand pounds of his own. On the death of my dear brother he was recalled to London by his uncle, who being much gratified by his improved knowledge of trade and his good conduct, is going to give him a share in his own business, and made no objection to the loan which, on his coming of age, he so generously tendered me."

"May God bless him!" ejaculated Henrietta, her upraised eyes swimming in grateful tears. She was re-echoed by all the family.

When it was known that Mr. Hilton had gained one friend, he procured

more, and in a short time he became enabled to remove his sister and her family who had been for some time in obscure lodgings, into a small but neat cottage, in a village about five miles from B——— where she would be within an easy distance from her son and brother, without being subjected to the remarks, or mortified by the pity of those who had known her better days. The situation was also deemed particularly desirable for the long-suffering little boy, whose sickness had now assumed the appearance of confirmed consumption.

The influence of long habit may be suspended until it appears subdued, yet return again when it is least expected, if no higher motive than the pressure of circumstance concurs to forbid its influence. Mr. Hilton had been so kind and generous to his sister, so anxious to obviate all her difficulties, and increase her comforts, that so soon as she found herself released from the positive sense

of poverty, a thousand of her old wants, wishes, and inclinations seemed to spring up from their long sleep, and claim indulgence. He soon found that the more he supplied, the more was claimed, and that it would be absolutely impossible to do justice to his friends and bestow help on the children demanded by their present wants and future prospects, without tying himself from bounty which was a crime in his situation, and would eventually be ruin to her who claimed it, still more decided than that which she had already known. He therefore, with equal wisdom and kindness, settled an annuity on his sister, which, however narrow, was the utmost his present income allowed, and which he paid in the form she deemed most convenient; but he informed Henrietta, that to *her* he looked for the prudent disposition of their little property, "she must be the mother of her brothers, and the husband of her mother."

Henrietta felt the necessity of all that her uncle said, but her mind was at present wholly absorbed in her cares for the dying Henry, whose long illness had not more endeared him to her, than the sad thought that the many scenes of sorrow he had witnessed, young as he was, had contributed to hasten his end. Whatever the tenderest attention could bestow, the most unwearied vigilance contrive, towards ameliorating his pains, and amusing his tedious confinement, Henrietta pursued; but the case was hopeless, the victim lingered long, but fell at last.

Whoever has trod the thorny path of duties such as these, will be well aware how firmly an object, thus endeared by its dependence on us, clings round the heart; nor can the icy hand of death itself tear it from its grasp. They are little read in the affections of the human heart, — have seldom trod the chamber of death, who talk of the benefits

of preparation — ah! when are we ready to part with those we love? to close the eyes of those who gaze on us with affection? never! never! never!

There was a terrible leisure, a forlorn blank in Henrietta's life, such as she had never felt before, that seemed to press on her spirits after the death of Henry with even greater severity than she had found it when her father died. At that time her mother claimed her, and fully had she admitted that claim, by foregoing her own grief to console the still keener sorrows of the bereaved wife; but she had at this time a sense of exhaustion, of wearied, worn-out mind, which had a right to claim in her turn, the support of sympathy; for it was certainly *her* on whom the weight of this affliction had intensely fallen. Yet her mother, as if aware that the *name* alone gave her an exclusive right to be considered chief mourner, did not attempt to console her, or consider the repose

required by her enfeebled spirits; the aid she so much wanted was either withheld, or denied, and there was a sense of forlorn and desolate distress in her present grief, which exceeded all the past.

There was a little kitchen-garden belonging to their cottage, which lay across the road that passed through the village, but when entered was perfectly retired. This place had all the privacy deep and sincere sorrow desires so much; and on the evening after Henry's interment, Henrietta stole there unnoticed, and found in the privilege of weeping unrestrained, a solace to the sadness of her heart. On the following evening, she was about to gain the same melancholy indulgence, and had partly crossed the road, when a gentleman on horseback coming up, caused her to quicken her steps with such improvident velocity, that ere she reached the garden-gate, she stumbled and fell. The gentleman and his servant hastened to her assistance, but she

had arisen ere they arrived at the spot, but in such pain as to be unable to move for her ancle was sprained; a deep rut in the road had occasioned her accident, and she felt herself unable to re-step it.

But even pain was banished, as she heard a well-remembered voice exclaim in tones of astonishment,—

"Is it possible that I behold Miss Hemmings? alone, too! at so late an hour."

"I am very near home, Sir," replied Henrietta, in a voice of mingled sorrow, mortification, and pride.

Hanway cast his eyes around, one small house alone was near; the next object of attention was her mourning dress, and the dejection of her countenance; volumes of information seemed to rush at once upon his mind and his heart, and call for his tenderest pity and regret. Under other circumstances, he must have given his whole soul to admiration, for never had he conceived

that Henrietta would have been so beautiful as she now appeared; the deep mourning she wore, contrasted with the transparent whiteness of her skin, and the glowing brilliance of that colour, which various emotions and acute pain called to her cheek, gave to her expressive features the highest finish of beauty, and all the captivation of youthful loveliness.

Captain Hanway instantly dismounted, and Henrietta could not hesitate to take his arm, as her foot was already considerably swollen. On reaching their humble dwelling, and receiving the faint, but sincere welcome of Mrs. Hemmings, the young soldier was scarcely sorry for any pretext for looking downwards, so much was he struck by the looks of the widow, whom obstinate sorrow, daily mortifications, and the absence of all adventitious aid, had combined to alter so much, that she appeared at this time as much older than she really was, as she

had once appeared younger; the ravages of twenty winters were comprised in two, and all around her seemed to speak of death and desolation; there were no rosy children whose playful voices broke on the dull monotony of solitary poverty, no remains of mental luxury in the simple apartment, and in its very neatness, there was something which increased the feeling of desolateness which pervaded every thing; it appeared to say that these privations were not temporary, they were the evils of remaining life.

When Henrietta withdrew for the purpose of procuring some application to her foot, the sense of the change pressed still more violently on Hanway and when, soon afterwards, the door opened and their little rustic maid appeared with the tea things, the contrast to past days struck him more forcibly than ever; he could contain himself no longer, throwing his handkerchief over his face, he sobbed aloud.

Mrs. Hemmings wept also, yet, she constrained herself to speak during the absence of her daughter.

"You have not heard of the great changes which have happened to us, Captain Hanway?"

"Oh, no madam, I have been abroad ever since I left B—— so suddenly; I was riding over there to see you this evening."

"Indeed! ah Sir! from that day to this, I have been harassed by incessant misfortunes."

"I was a stranger, wholly a stranger to all, would to God I had not."

At this moment Henrietta re-entered, and, in the frankness, feeling, and honest fervour of this exclamation, felt that Hanway was exculpated; and something like pleasure stole over her long harassed heart; yet, the temporary roses had now fled her cheek, and the soft dejection that usually tinged her countenance again suffused it; she did not, like her mother,

weep, but Hanway saw too well how much she had suffered, and felt almost surprize that she

> ————————— could bloom so fair,
> Now, poverty's cold winds and chilling rains,
> Beat keen and heavy on her tender youth.

When the parties were sufficiently composed to enter upon conversation, the stranger informed them that he was going for a few months to be stationary in the town of D——, within six miles of them, and he hoped he might be permitted to call and enquire after the injury he had been so unfortunate as to cause. Henrietta's heart beat violently, she felt that it was better, much better that she should see him no more; but, while she sought words for denial, which were indeed difficult to find, her mother had, with an eager expression of pleasure, declared, "that his visits would be most gratifying to creatures so dull and wretched as they were."

Deeply affected by what he had witnessed, Hanway pursued his original intention of riding to B——, and making every possible enquiry respecting Mrs. Hemmings and her family. He dreaded seeing them again, until he was apprised of the nature and extent of their misfortunes, lest he should, by some ill-timed question or remark, open the sluices of sorrow, and lacerate the wounds he earnestly desired to heal. The number and severity of Mrs. Hemmings's late trials, and the obscurity in which she now lived, had disarmed censure, and converted her former accusers into panegyrists, for even envy might be softened into pity, by trials like hers. The virtues of Henrietta were every where extolled, and there were many who ventured to predict, that though she was now low in the world, the time would come, when such merit and beauty would meet their reward, in a situation calculated to exhibit them to the advantage

they deserved; and, one lady especially prophesied, "that bye-and-bye Sir Charles Elkington would not fail to renew his addresses."

The name of a rival, especi lly one of rank and fortune, distressed Hanway, since he felt now, more than ever, the utter impossibility of marrying, for, although advanced in rank, he was aware that his expenses had been also more than disproportionately increased; yet he renewed his visit, and once renewed, ventured to go again and again; he loved, admired, esteemed Henrietta; he found in her society exhaustless charms, in her virtues the justification of an attachment which seemed to fill his whole soul, and affect every movement of his mind. In fact, he idolized her, and her secluded situation, her many misfortunes, and her total dependence, only added to the romantic enthusiasm with which he contemplated her, and added the tenderness of pity, to the fascination of love.

But, if such was the love of Hanway for Henrietta, still stronger and far deeper, though less ardent, was the attachment he now inspired, in the bosom of a young woman, whom every circumstance, as well as every native feeling, tended to dispose for the reception of this baleful but insinuating guest. Henrietta loved Hanway to a certain degree, when she was surrounded by admirers, and distracted by dissipation, and few were so calculated, since few were so gifted by fancy and sensibility, to feel his attractions as she was then; but now, shut out from the world, bereft of an object of the fondest solicitude, conscious of the pleasures of congenial mind and polished society, grateful for that distinction, no longer accorded her; no wonder that her youthful bosom abandoned itself to the sweet soul soothing solace early love inspires, and which, chastened by the many fears, inseparable from an union of hearts in those unblest by fortune, becomes a

sentiment of such dear and sacred importance, such profound emotion, as to impart a species of new being to the bosom that enshrines it.

When Captain Hanway had declared himself, he became a daily visitor at the cottage, and his presence soon recalled those dormant powers, and restored the exercise of those elegant accomplishments, which severe affliction and cramping penury had repressed. Music, drawing, and poetry, again amused the hours, and occupied the mind of Henrietta. An elegant instrument, various books, and the materials for painting, were presented by her lover, and ever joyfully received by the mother at least, who, naturally generous, and habitually thoughtless, received with the same frankness she would once have given, and had no idea of inculcating the necessity of care even to her affianced son-in-law. Yet Mrs. Hemmings well knew in her own person, the value of money; she knew

also, that Hanway's circumstances were by no means equal to his taste for expense, nor the style which he sought to display as the son of a titled mother. Affliction had failed to teach her to look beyond the hour; and finding her solitary dwelling illumined with one elegant guest, who seemed once more to link her with the world she had quitted, she found her mind emerge from the morbid dejection in which it had lain so long, and foolishly pant after pleasures no longer attainable.

But Henrietta, in the smile of her Edward, as he listened to her song, or approved her sketches, felt that her whole world was before her, and that not only her affection, but her vanity and her ambition were satisfied; for him she sought to improve in skill, to shake off the languor of sorrow, and regain the brilliance of health and the charm of vivacity. If in conversation she touched upon past sorrows, it was to apologize for deficiency,

to awaken interest, but never to communicate pain; for the moment a cloud rose to *his* brow, or a sigh parted *his* lips, she rallied all her powers to dissipate the transient trouble, and was frequently surprised to find in herself the sallies of sportive imagination, the flashes of genuine humour, could return, which irradiated her entrance into life, but were obscured in its earliest movements.

It will be seldom found that those persons who have not exercised social affections in general, whose hearts have not been early bent and moulded, to the "charities of life," will really love any individual with such purity, profoundness, and self-annihilation, as those will do, whose inclinations and faculties have been thus devoted. Hence it rarely happens that an only child, or one whom excessive indulgence has rendered selfish, however violent the passion they conceive for an object, are therefore devoted to its happiness. Henrietta's warm and

gentle heart, had from infancy expanded its affections, and she had not mixed long enough in the gay world for vanity to mislead, or self love to harden her heart; hence the affection which she conceived, was superior to that which she inspired, both in its nature and extent.

When from the duties of his profession, or any other incidental engagement, Hanway was prevented from paying his accustomed visits, the knowledge that he was usefully or pleasantly employed, consoled Henrietta for the loss of that which was her only pleasure; but the time thus spent by him, was passed either in ill-humour or wretchedness; and as his invitations became more frequent, the longer he remained in his present quarters; and he could not refuse them without subjecting his lonely rides to animadversions he wished to avoid; he was compelled to remember, what he had of late appeared to forget, that the time must shortly arrive, when he would be called

upon for a separation, of the most important nature.

The next time he beheld Henrietta, after this distressing thought had weighed most heavily on his mind, he was evidently disturbed; and even her kindness rendered him more unequal to enduring the terrible images that crowded upon his mind: so ardent was his passion, so much did life, seem only life, when it was passed with her, that the idea of separation awoke grief almost to phrenzy; and he determined never to subject himself to such a misery. But yet a little reflection told him, that to marry without his mother's approbation, was impossible, since if he had found her generous allowance, in addition to his pay, indispensable, and in fact, insufficient for his wants, as a single man, should she withdraw it, what would become of him when he was married? If, two years ago, he dared not seek her consent for the daughter of a flourishing merchant, how could

he ask it for the inhabitant of a cottage, supported by the charity of a plodding tradesman, her only relative.

At length, with all the anguish with which his heart overflowed, but with the delicacy which love ever inspires, he revealed these thoughts to Henrietta, and claimed her counsel; at the same time protesting, that his fears for the future were entirely on her account, and if she dared to meet her fate, he would marry her on the morrow.

A dream, of mild but entrancing pleasure, had so many weeks lulled the cares of Henrietta to repose, and 'steeped her senses in Elysium,' she had been so 'absolute in her content,' that she had not looked beyond it. The picture of parting, now presented by her lover, dissolved the dream of bliss, dispelled the mist which enwrapped her, and forced her to the contemplation of dreadful realities.

Yet still more unable to endure his

sorrows than her own, she repelled the agony which rose to her mind, and sought to support him by eluding that which was inevitable. "Why speak of parting?" said she, "let us not meet sorrow half way, whilst you remain here we are happy, and ——"

"No, no, not happy," cried Hanway, impetuously, "I can never be happy till you are mine beyond the reach of accident — I love, I adore you, Henrietta, and I can welcome ruin with you."

Henrietta's blood seemed to curdle round her heart; "I will not ruin you," said she in a tone of tremulous firmness; "I can suffer for you, or with you, but I cannot inflict suffering upon you."

Hanway apologised for an expression which he said was extorted by despair, "he was confident that if his mother were acquainted with her, she would love her; but as she was not so happy, he feared that, although to him the tenderest and most generous of parents, she

would not forgive so rash a step, and without her forgiveness, how could he support a wife?"

This important, though distressing, conversation, was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Hemmings; but the last sentence rested on the mind of Henrietta. —Subdued to circumstances, weaned from all luxurious indulgences, and finding all her hopes and wishes, bounded by him alone, she thought that if she were in his place, she could maintain such a wife as she was likely to make; but on the other hand, she allowed for his habits, which, if not extravagant, were at least expensive; she considered, that the excess of his passion prompted him to bestow on her, that which she desired not for herself; and gratitude to the generosity of her lover's passion, finally arose from this review of their conversation.

On re-considering this important subject, she recollected that Hanway had

thrown out repeated hints of his wishes for a private marriage; and convinced that when with him, and witnessing his agitation and distress, she had but little power to refuse such a request, should he urge it more decidedly; she resolved to review the subject with all the calmness it demanded. She had frequently heard her lover speak of his mother, as the best of parents; as one, who, for the sake of her children, had quitted society in the zenith of her days; and, full of care and self-denial in her own person, was munificent in all that regarded them; and, that if she had a fault, it was her partiality to himself as her only son, and the representative of his father. The heart of Henrietta naturally ingenuous, and imbued by her father with the strictest notions of integrity, shrunk abhorrent from every species of deception towards such a woman, and she resolved never to enter her family clandestinely; never to aid her son in purchasing her just indig-

nation, and incurring for himself repentance, which it would be ever his duty to feel.

Fearful of again beholding that sorrow which might overcome her strongest resolutions, she instantly sat down to write her sentiments to Hanway, who, on the entrance of her mother had hastily departed: many a sheet was defaced by her tears, unintelligible from the incoherence of her expressions ; but at length one was dispatched, which entreated that if he could not gain the consent of his mother to their union, he would endeavour to desist from a connexion that would be fatal to his future happiness — yet of the former she despaired, and the latter she felt, would be more terrible than death.

Some wise and virtuous actions, bring a present reward in the consciousness of having acted well, but this is rarely the lot of those whose trials arise from love ;

it was in vain that Henrietta told herself again and again, that she had acted right; in vain assured herself, that if Hanway's honour and happiness were eventually preserved, she should be content, even were she to behold him the husband of a wealthier bride. Truth and love denied the assertion, and the only pleasureable thought which arose from her letter was, the hope that its injunctions would be disobeyed.

The day following passed, she received no answer, nor did Hanway himself appear; never had a night been so long as the succeeding, and when the morn arose, it brought no relief. This day passed also in a state of intolerable anguish, and towards the close, she procured a person to ride over to the town of D——, and enquire "if Captain Hanway were at home," and, if possible, to learn how he were employed.

It was late in the night, when her rus-

tic messenger returned, and astonished, not less than he tortured her by the information he brought, by saying, that Captain Hanway had left his lodgings two days before in a chaise and four, neither saying where he was going, nor whether he would return.

"What! then had she driven him for ever from her? had her own hand consigned her to a life of misery?" For a moment she detested her conduct, the next she upbraided the weakness which so soon shrunk from obeying a resolution, dictated by pure regard for its object. She now accused him for having so soon resigned her, and then transferred the blame to her own hard heart, which had chosen the season of his severest struggle, the very period when he most fondly loved her, to inflict on him a stroke he was unable to endure.

The rest of the night was spent by Henrietta in alternate struggles to obtain

fortitude, or, in bitter lamentations for an action which had destroyed all present happiness, without opening future hope. In the morning, her messenger was again dispatched for tidings, as the first transports of sorrow, ever busy themselves in seeking an excuse for their excess, or grasp at a shadow to obtain relief.

It appeared, from the evening news, that Captain Hanway's retreat was still unknown, and, that many of his brother officers had expressed great concern at the circumstance, as an order, expected about this time, had actually arrived, and the town was in a great bustle from the soldiers marching out of it. From this it appeared, that in his flight all personal interest and professional duty had been forgotten, and, that the end which she had sacrificed her own happiness to obtain, was in every way lost; "his despair had driven him to ruin, and it was

from her hand that he had received the blow."

The painful suspense, the restless inquietude of grief, now changed to a species of alarm, an excess of sorrow, that admitted no control, throwing herself into the arms of her mother, she retraced every word and circumstance that had taken place, and besought her pity and counsel; but it was in vain that Mrs. Hemmings endeavoured to console her, for with her present feelings, she had in fact little sympathy, and, though roused to unusual exertion by the severity of her daughter's sufferings, yet, her words of comfort fell coldly on the bereaved heart of Henrietta, and, at length, recalling sufficient energy to continue her usual mode of enduring trouble, she entreated her mother to retire to rest.

But for Henrietta there was no rest; all night long she wandered about her

little dwelling, impatiently watching for the beams of morning, as if a ray of light to her eyes would chase the shadows from her benighted bosom.

CHAP. III.

I did not take my leave of him, but had
Most pretty things to say: ere I could tell him
How I would think of him at certain hours,
Such thoughts, and such,—— SHAKSPEARE.

THE village clock struck six, and Henrietta opened her window-shutters, and cast her eyes towards the east, but she had scarcely time to remark the first golden streak that tinged the horizon, when the sound of wheels startled her, and she was retiring from the window, when a carriage stopped, and the figure of a man alighting from a post-chaise met her eye. Though dimly seen, and wrapped in a cloak, yet her heart whispered it could be only Hanway. Trembling, and with breathless haste, she flew to the door, and without reflecting on danger, unbarred it. As she opened it,

she perceived that the stranger had discharged the chaise, and was indeed advancing; she could doubt no longer, and the excess of joy she felt destroyed the little animation that was left to her; she stretched out her arms towards him, and fell fainting on the threshold.

"Henrietta, my own beloved Henrietta!"

But Henrietta was cold and lifeless, and Mrs. Hemmings had arisen and chafed her hands and forehead many minutes, ere the voice of Hanway was heard, ere the sound of life and love revisited her senses.

When Henrietta found herself supported by her mother, and Hanway kneeling before her, a deep blush suffused her pallid countenance, on recollecting how decisive a proof she had given of his power over her, but she had suffered too much since the time of osing him, to impute her indisposition to any cause less flattering than the true

one, and she suffered the hand he held to remain in his, whilst he informed her of the eventful journey he had taken.

"When, Henrietta, I received your dear, though cruel letter, in which surely you had combined whatever was great, tender, and affecting in woman, I determined immediately to throw myself on my mother's mercy, assured that such a disposition as her's could not fail to recognise kindred excellence, and overlooking all lesser things, acknowledge your extraordinary merit."

Henrietta fixed her eyes on Hanway, with a look of agonising curiosity.

"Alas! our parents cannot easily be brought to see with our eyes, and I had long assailed my mother by prayers and sighs, before I prevailed upon her even to look at your letter; but having done so, she was really affected, and after having made a few enquiries, (and commented upon my past errors,) she at

length gave me a conditional consent, and a promise that certainly claims my gratitude."

"Heaven reward her goodness," ejaculated Henrietta.

"Ah, my dear girl, you know not yet the conditions — she requires us to wait till Emma is of age, because at that time she will have completed the sum which she has long been saving as the portion of my sisters, and as at that time her income will increase, she offers me a very handsome portion of it; with certain proviso's as to prudence, and all that."

"But how old is your sister, Captain Hanway?" said Mrs. Hemmings impatiently.

"Only seventeen, ma'am, she is several months younger than Henrietta; you must see at once the utter impossibility of our waiting so long! But since my mother does not object to my choice, since she is aware of the superior merit of your daughter, and the uncontrolable

passion she has inspired, surely, you, madam, will unite with me in requesting Henrietta to relax from the severity of her resolutions, and consent to a private marriage; in fact, I cannot live without her."

Mrs. Hemmings thought it was apparently an equal impossibility for Henrietta to live without *him*; she glanced from one pale and harassed face to the other, and although she did not like to agree to any plan which might render retirement still necessary; yet the belief that a mother who had conceded so much, would probably soon grant more, (blending with her compassion for the lovers, and most probably a little for herself, whose comforts were nearly linked with those of her companion,) altogether induced her to say that she should have no objection to her daughter's marriage, and would do her best to conceal it, until the time when Lady

Isabella was likely to receive it favourably."

Hanway looked imploringly to Henrietta; she spoke not, and his intreaties flowed in all the eloquence of impassioned love, while his pale, disordered features, yet more fervently seconded his cause; at length she answered:

"Your mother confides in me, she honours me by believing me capable of steady affection, and do you think I ought to betray her generous confidence? Shall I at once ruin you, and disgrace myself, and in becoming your wife, render myself unworthy of being such? Oh, no! no! I know what the pangs of parting are, they are terrible; but it is far better to endure them than such an alternative as this."

There was an air of such calm dignity, blended with true tenderness, in the voice and manners of Henrietta as she uttered these words; and it was so evi-

dent that she loved as fondly, as she insisted justly; that Hanway felt unable to urge her farther; and he sunk into silent, yet not stubborn sorrow. Henrietta seized the moment for proving to him the advantages of acquiescing with his mother's wishes, of softening the tedium of absence, by frequent correspondence and occasional interviews; but, before she had concluded her address, a knocking at the cottage door interrupted her, and in a moment afterwards Colonel Maynard rushed into the room.

Regardless of the confussion of all parties, he hastily exclaimed, in a tone of vexation,

"Hanway, for heaven's sake, where have you been, and what have you been doing? Your absence has nearly ruined you."

"I have been visiting my mother on business of importance; I know it was wrong; but I lost not a moment in

returning, you see the situation I am in."

"But are you not married?"

"Married, no; would to God I were!"

"Madman! we are ordered to the East Indies immediately. I have sought you every where these two days, and last night returned to D—— as the last effort to retrieve your honour, and was quitting the place in despair when meeting the post boys that drove you, I learnt where to find you."

"Now, *now*, you will be mine," cried Hanway throwing himself at Henrietta's feet.

She answered not; an agony like convulsion sat upon her features, and the colonel learnt from Mrs. Hemmings the state of that negociation he had interrupted by such alarming information, nor did she conceal the previous distress exhibited by Henrietta.

"Hanway," cried the colonel, "are

you a man, and can you thus add to the sufferings of a woman who loves you? It is utterly impossible for Henrietta to accompany you; it would be the height of folly and ingratitude for you to offend your mother by a hasty and clandestine marriage. Besides, neither you, nor me, can delay a single hour; but mark me, the same true greatness of mind which enables Henrietta to persist in refusing you now, will show her that she can without blame follow you, her affianced lover, when the time of your probation expires. I, myself will engage that my own sister shall accompany her to the Cape, where we may meet them. Henrietta, my good girl, rouse yourself, speak a cheerful farewel to us, if you can. I here swear by the honour of a soldier I will be your father on your wedding day."

"I do promise most solemnly," said Henrietta raising her streaming eyes to heaven, "that I will follow him over

the wide world, when I have his mother's permission to become his wife."

"You can ask no more," said the colonel, as deeply sympathising for the sufferings of both, he withdrew for the purpose of giving orders to Hanway's servant respecting his master's luggage, and bringing the carriage in which he travelled close to the cottage door. On re-entering the the little parlour he found the lovers locked in each others arms; but Henrietta endeavoured to whisper hope and comfort to Hanway, in whose wild, disordered features, were blended the stupor of grief, and the delirium of frenzy, and he turned on his friend looks of fury, which nothing less than the sincerest regard, and most considerate pity could have endured. Henrietta exerted herself to the very utmost, to calm his passion, and her soft intreaties at length so far succeeded, that he wept like an infant, but yet it was by an effort little short of

absolute force, that he was finally torn from the cottage.

Henrietta gazed after him with an intenseness that seemed to concentre every sense and faculty in vision, and remained apparently petrified, until the last vestige of the vehicle which bore him away was lost; when she sunk fainting into the arms of her mother, as if life itself had departed with the object who alone endeared it.

Long successive faintings continued to harass her for several days, and she was so ill as really to alarm Mrs. Hemmings, who regretted, now it was too late, that she had not made earlier enquiries into the situation of Captain Hanway, or that she had not cautioned Henrietta against the entire surrender of her affections, and of course her happiness, into the hands of one who was unable to requite the former, and insure the latter: she even began to doubt whether she had not done wrong in admitting his visits

from the first, but not liking any train of thought which led to self-condemnation, she forbore pursuing the subject farther; concluding, in her own mind, that it was no wonder she had eagerly accepted the only agreeable circumstance that had occurred to enliven the solitude she abhorred.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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